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1st Place General Art

Antonio Banda

1st Place Short Story

The Shiny Little Cross

Pedro Lugo

Staring into his eyes, I could see the pain he was holding back in tears. Sitting there, motionless, I could not understand why this man I barely knew would share his horrific story with me.

“I don’t even know why I asked for the keys ---, I didn’t even know how to drive,” he stared blankly into a memory.

“Prepare for chow,” a prison guard yelled, bringing us both out of a reverie that held us bound.

Later that day, sitting on the floor with my back against the wall outside the door of my cell, I wondered if I could ever be forgiven by the families of my victims. Hesitating to open my little worn out New Testament, I scanned the day-room, and there he was, sitting on a stainless steel table, looking up at a TV mounted on the wall. He wore a white muscle t-shirt, exposing tattoos that could barely be seen due to his dark colored skin. That was when I noticed the cross on his arm that look all too familiar.

I finally opened my pocket Testament and read a scripture where Jesus spoke of forgiveness.

“I can’t Lord,” I whispered to God under my breath.

“Yes you can,” He replied, “I forgave you.”

Closing my eyes and leaning my head back, I relived the story I saw through the eyes of a killer.

I saw them first invading some luckless woman’s home, making their way back into a parking-lot with her belongings, including the keys to her car. Not knowing how to drive a standard, his partner in crime could not get them out of first gear. Suddenly, a man in a white truck pulled up and cursed at them through the crack of the passenger window -- a “hero.” Getting out of the car, the killer fired off a buck-shot, bursting that window. Watching intently, his other two crime partners stay in a get-away car parked nearby. Before the

smoke cleared from the barrel of the gun, both the “hero” and the killer’s two partners were gone, fleeing off into the night.

“So there I was,” he said, “alone and running on foot with a shotgun and a purse when I encountered a couple carrying grocery bags they had just gotten out of their trunk. I pointed the shotgun in their direction and demanded the keys. Seeing the fear in her eyes and that she was about to let out a scream, I aimed toward her face and pulled the trigger. Cocking the shotgun, I then pointed it at the man’s chest. At point blank range, I squeezed on the hair trigger.”

Voices from the day-room brought me back to the present moment. I thought about that shiny little cross, my only possession that held any sentimental value. It was left to me twenty-five years ago, after my parents were brutally murdered by a fifteen year old, now serving life in prison. The same cross that was linked to the keys he asked for when he, “didn’t even know how to drive.” I was only ten.

At that moment, my heart went cold and numb. Rebelling against God, I whispered to Him, “Forgiveness is not an option. I must avenge the blood that cries out to me.”

His response was, “What about the blood I shed for you on the cross?”



1st Place Photography
Ashlan Day

2nd Place Short Story

Marionettes

Antonio Banda

The show was on its way to begin, and the performers Diana and Daphne, late as usual, rushed into their unitards. Josef, the strongman, prepped for his act in his Tarzan outfit while applying a Vaseline-like substance to his curly moustache. It came as a shock to me and Diana when her twin, Daphne, began dating that meathead Josef. No one can blame her; our act travels across the globe, but we rarely meet anyone new or interesting. There was one other performer the quiet and reserved snake charmer, Ananta. He never spoke, and his face had a melancholic expression with a face withered down by years of depression. I wondered if it could be because he handles and carries around a poisonous king cobra with him all hours of the day. We could not care less. We were Barbies living in a dream house.

As the twins performed, the rest of us waited in our uncomfortably hard steel chairs. I have always assumed it was to help our posture, but hooking our limbs around this metallic torture device is inhumane and no way to treat star performers. Daphne and Diana are two parts of the same magnet, complete opposites. They can each pass for the other, but could be easily be identified by their personalities. Diana lives up to a name like hers; she is something of a virtuous princess. Daphne, however, is more of a supporting character pulled from *The Great Gatsby*, she wanted to be wild and free. From last night's rehearsal and the roar of the applause the twins absolutely nailed it. Their contrasting personalities seem to balance out as they perform. Daphne was the ravaging hurricane around the calm center eye, Diana was tearing the audience off their feet. The "Boss" is now introducing the star performer *moi*.

"And now please give a round of applause for the magnificent Penelope." I could hear the cheers and the rising of the crowd as they shot out of their seats. This whole experience bestows upon me a glowing red in my cheeks and a smile on my face, but never nervousness. Stage fright is an outfit I could never wear. There is something about the stage that screams home. It feels like I was created specifically for this purpose. With the crowd cloaked in darkness and the light beamed in my eyes, shadows and silhouettes were the only

recognizable figures, as always. The performance is a solo scene from *Swan Lake*, and I was the tragic bound Odette. It progressed slowly as the ballet and music overtook me creating the impression of cadenced movements throughout the act. As the end approached a sudden jolt originating from my neck jerked my head now facing the opposite direction in which it was meant to be. A murmur traveled the audience. I was shocked. My body began to correct itself, yet all I longed to do was curl up in a ball from shame and embarrassment. This was not my mistake, but there was no one else to blame. The audience settled and continued to watch my act. The realization came that I was not in control of my own body. My body continued to perform as rehearsed and there was nothing I could do about it. The tormenting melody subsided and was replaced with an agonizing applause. An involuntary bow resulted.

I rushed off stage urgently wanting to speak with Diana or Daphne, but the peculiarity of this day has not finished. My legs wanted to run towards my friends, but it was like a nightmare where I remained stationary. I can see them, but the path seemed to stretch and darken. I could make out their faces. Never had their eyes seemed glossier or more lost. I must have blacked out. The next second I awoke on my uncomfortable chair in a different room, a smaller place, but the same crisis. I was in a glass box, but could barely scan the room in this veil of black. Only a small sliver of moonlight touched this room. The cold glass against my hands created goosebumps that flowed through my shoulders down my back. It felt hopeless to scream for help, so I huddled in a corner and whimpered.

“You’ll learn to live with it,” a familiar voiced announced near me.

“Daphne? Is that you? What’s going on? What are we doing here?” I responded hysterically.

“We’re nothing, but controllable dolls” she said.

She explained this “circus act” was nothing more than a puppet show performed by a semi-famous puppeteer. Our act was not even our act. It was an Earth shattering revelation for me. The life I lived is a lie and technically never belonged to me.

“Do Diana and Josef know?” I asked.

“They don’t. There here next to me with these mindlessly dead eyes. You can see them when the moonlight shifts in this direction. It is disturbing to look at,” Daphne said.

“It seems our awareness ironically allows us to talk with one another,” another voice said on

the other side of me.

“Ananta? You knew as well?” I shrieked.

“You will better assess the situation when you realize nothing can be done.” Ananta said.

“What if we escape?” I exclaimed.

“You think that’s a viable option?” Ananta chuckled. “Look up, you are attached to a cross by strings. Even if what you say is possible, what would we do? Go off and lead normal lives? We’re puppets, Penelope.” Ananta stated. “Do you realize you have never left your seat?” Ananta added.

My astonished mind was dragged back to my lifeless ragdoll body and I realized I barely moved a centimeter. I’m still on this torture device. My mind had literally wandered.

“A humorous misconception about snake charmers is we do not charm snakes with music; the dangerous reptiles respond to movement of fingers, much like we do,” Ananta declared. “We are bound here. This could be a heaven or a hell depending on how you make it.” I refused to listen. “This is how it is and will continue to be until we are passed to the next generation and the next as our bodies begin to deteriorate,” Ananta went on. A sick feeling bellowed inside me and twisted through my insides. My body is frozen and I can only stare at the abyss as it stares back at me. Nothing seems to matter anymore; we are in Barbie’s house of horror.



2nd Place Cover Art

Abigail Ortiz

3rd Place Short Story

Reflections

Vincent Wilmore

Aunt Betty, best known as “Momma,” is and has been my strength while dealing with my incarceration. The rules and people seem to change on a daily basis in this environment. We not only face the problems everyone on the outside deal with, but we are subjected to under-trained power hungry guards and inmates from every walk of life.

I was not there for Momma, six years after at her passing, I still hear and see her in my dreams.

“Vincent,” that voice could always wake me from a very deep sleep.

“I need to have a word with you. Please, baby, be careful, you’re moving too fast in life lately.”

“Count-time, pre-prepare for chow, and pill window.” I wake from the voice of the officer.

Momma raised me from teenage years to adulthood. We met in the summer of 1987, while visiting my father on vacation. They shared a home together; my biological mother put me in her care. She took the responsibility of raising me, so naturally we became very close.

The Nigerian officer says, “Give me your ID.” Staying in compliance is the best way to keep an officer quiet and send him on his way.

While putting on my clothes, getting ready for work, a thought come to mind. “What will today be like,” my assigned duty is to cook in the kitchen. The shift hours are two, till eight-a.m. Working helps keep my mind off the free-world, family, and my fellow offenders.

Upon entering the kitchen, a female officer draws my attention.

“Listen, son, as you start to date there are three types of women in the world: good, better, and best stick. With your first two choices, you’ll never find the third.”

“Wilmore,” the guard’s voice snaps me back to reality.

“Try finishing early so everybody can leave; today’s menu is small, and remember clean as you go,” the kitchen sergeant tells me.

While incarcerated positive decision making is a start for any offender’s rehabilitation and a goal one must achieve before re-entering society.

Prison’s main purpose is housing offenders. Change must be initiated by an individual who wants better in life.

The vast majority of my time was spent with Momma, in the kitchen, never taking time to learn how to cook. Being pleased with my diligent work, the kitchen captain signed me up for culinary arts; my plans were to show Momma the cooking skill I learned in class.

Momma’s family is creole; they came from French ancestry. The vast majority of creoles are light skinned, and love to cook. Also, the language is French, with a heavy southern accent.

“Baby, slow down your drinking is getting out of control,” Momma tells me!

“I’ll get help Momma, I promise,” were my words of choice, so she will leave it be.

“Hey watch it,” a co-worker tells me. Not paying any attention, we almost collided with pots and pans.

As my day comes to a close, I’m full and tired, might as well go back to the dorm to relax. That was my intention.

“Wilmore, go to the chapel,” the guard tells me.

When an offender is told they are needed in the chapel, he would figure that is a good thing. It is not! Always some type of bad news comes from the chapel.

When I enter the chapel, the air is stale, and the hallway dimly lit. Chaplin Bell is a small man, very frail, with a goat tee, and a dingy baseball cap. His greeting was very rude.

“You, Wilmore?”

“Yes, sir, I am.”

“Do you know Sonny Johnson? He called asking for you.”

“That is my Uncle,” I replied. But I thought, “Man, I am screwed.” Momma told me my Uncle volunteered in the prisons. She could not remember which one it was.

From the conversation we were having, I thought he worked here. A situation like this would get me shipped far away from the area.

“Why do you ask?” trying to be slick with my answer. “Do you know Betty Charles?”

“That is my Momma why?”

“She passed Sunday.”

“Today is Thursday, you are telling me four days later.”

“I received the call on my way home, plus you are hard to find.”

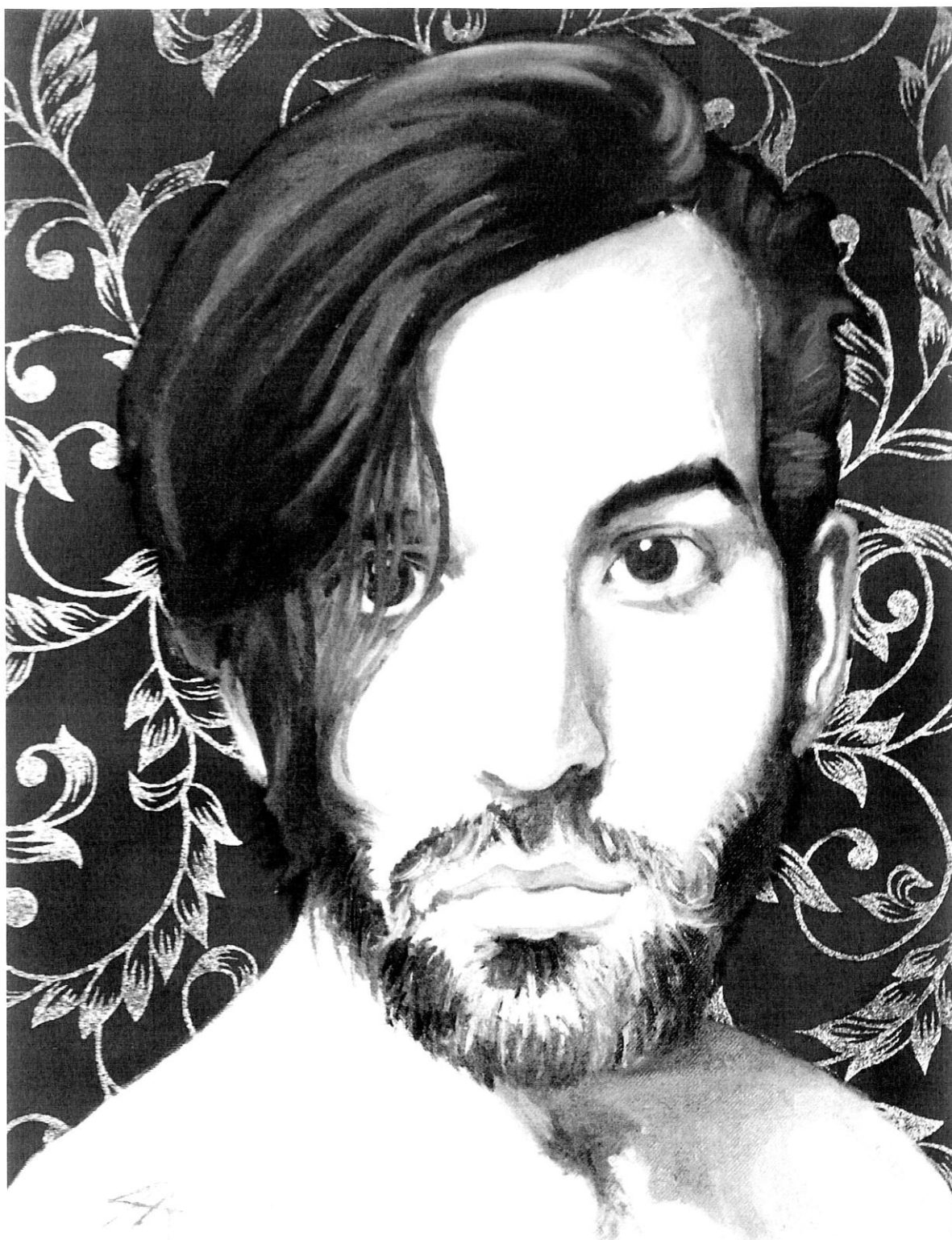
“Sir, I’m on a prison compound; surrounded by razor wire and three gun towers.” “Well, anyway, do you want to make a phone call?”

“I’ll be damned, he just blew me off.” I said to myself.

I called home, talked to my sister, she explained the details about Momma, and I hung up.

Chaplin Bell gave me a pass for three-days off work, so that I could get a hold of myself. Incarceration is something I would never wish on anybody.

In my dreams, after her passing Momma still haunts me. The Bible and Qur’an both state that when we die, we rest until judgement day. Or, do we move on to another life, one from which we can still communicate with loved ones?



2nd Place General Art
Skyler Porras

Honorable Mention Short Story

Deciding to Drive

Silvia Mercado

The alarm was screaming at me to wake up, the sun barely peaked over the horizon. My eyes were shut as my mother turned on the light, blinding me. The light shined brighter than the sun in the middle of the day. I punched the alarm clock thinking, “Here we go again.” The clock read five thirty-one in the morning and it was time to begin another extensive day.

It was my last year in high school. All my friends were still sleeping as I got up for school. They all drove their cars to school while I strolled down the busy street of 9th Ave. It was only the second week in the school, and my fear of driving was already ruining what was supposed to be the best year of my teenager life because of losing sleep every morning, wasting time walking, and spending no time with my friends in the afternoon. As I trotted around in my room hunting for and gathering my clothes and makeup, I recall thinking, “Today is the day, today is the last day I will waste time walking anywhere, especially at school.” After having breakfast and brushing my teeth and hair, I walked outside to begin my journey to school as I had been doing for what seemed like an eternity. I stared at my car sitting in the driveway and shook my head, knowing I could never control such an enormous machine. The responsibility of being behind the wheel was just too much for me to handle.

My day at school went as the usual day does in the first weeks of any school year. The chaos of wanting to sit by all your friends in all your classes, the teachers who are over prepared and those who do not know what they are doing; and trying to get used to the new lunch menu the district came up with this year. At lunch, after eating my slice of pizza and chatting with friends, I purchased a water bottle and threw it in my backpack then headed to fifth period; English. Hours has passed as I sat in seventh period. I caught myself gazed out the window. I heard the teacher babbling about some World War II event, but my focus was on the bright sun shining outside. I realized it was almost that dreaded time of day again. The bell rang loudly and the entire class jumped out of their seats and stormed out the door as they all headed home. I gathered my things, drank some water and began my excursion home.

It was a bright, hot, and humid Tuesday afternoon. The temperature was 101 degrees Fahrenheit, the sun was boiling and it was roasting me as I walked home from school. As I arrived to the enormous 2000 square feet, fiery red house in which I lived, I saw the shiny, dark blue, 1995 Toyota Corolla. Complete with chrome rims, leather seats, and a panoramic sunroof, it was a sight for sore eyes. I stormed inside the house huffing, puffing, and sweating as I chucked my backpack and snatched the car keys off of the wall. I jerked the driver door open and sat behind the steering wheel. For the first time in an eternity after passing my driver's test, my car was on again.

A Spanish station played softly and the talk show hosts talked about the current weather. I remember buckling my seatbelt and shifting the gear to reverse and backing out of the driveway. I drove along the beachside road hearing birds peeping as they flew across my windshield like a swift plane. I thought, "All the beautiful things I've missed out on, the many times I turned down parties and going to the movies, or hanging out at the mall or beach with friends, simply because I was embarrassed about asking for a ride when I had a license and a car, and my fear of driving was too great to even try." From that day on, I was unstoppable; I overpowered my fear of driving. I enjoyed it so much; I feared having to leave that beautiful dark blue beauty that made me feel like I was in paradise.



2nd Place Photography
Kristi Segura

Honorable Mention Short Story

One to Remember

Danny Strickland

The stars were fading as the clear night sky was giving way to the coming dawn. Jeff and I had been planning and anticipating this trip for a month. He hopped out of the air-conditioned pickup and opened the gate so I could pull through, then quickly closed and locked the gate again. By the time he got back in the truck, sweat beaded on his neck and forehead.

We rolled down the windows and eased across the fresh cut hay meadow. The only moment was us, the night was silent and still. The fresh cut coastal grass lingered in the air. In the edge of the headlights, a large doe and her fawn were drinking from a huge stock tank. As we noisily approached, they dashed away.

I parked the truck close to the water so Jeff and I could unload the small aluminum boat, rods, reels, ice chest, and tackle boxes. By the time we launched the boat, the sun was peeking over the horizon. We were creating the only ripple in the lake.

We crept into the shallows in total silence, and each of us carefully chose our lures and where to place our first cast. Jeff chose a “jitter bug,” and sat it ever so softly next to a dead limb. He clicked the reel to start his retrieval, and the bait wiggled. It had not moved six inches and the water exploded into action! I hollered, “No fair! I ain’t made my cast yet.” Jeff whooped, “It’s a hog, boy!” and the fight was on. After a couple moments that seemed like an eternity, Jeff pulled a nine pound-four ounce large-mouth bass from the water.

I had chosen a “buzz bait,” and must now make my first cast count. The placement was perfect, right off the edge of a bunch of lily pads. Jeff swears the fish jumped and caught my lure in midair, but disaster struck. My reel “backlashed,” and looked like a birds nest; this small fish was steadily pulling all the little knots tighter and tighter.

Jeff was catching nice fish with almost every cast, and I was spending the morning un-tangling my first one. The sun and temperature were steadily rising and so was my blood pressure. Finally, after an hour and forty-five minutes, my reel was back in working order. As I retrieved my line, I realized the small fish had tangled my buzz bait in the roots of an old dead oak tree and gotten away. Giving in to disgust, I cursed and cut the line.

By now, Jeff had caught twelve very nice fish, and I was hearing about it! So, I picked a “rattle trap” from my box and tied it on. I think I tried every lure in my box, and Jeff’s box too, and could not get buy a bite! Jeff was having the time of his life. We even swapped fish- ing rods, and he continued to catch fish while I caught nothing. At noon we returned to the truck, Jeff had twenty-one fish with the smallest weighing right under five pounds. The larg- est was his first catch of the day, and I had caught zero.

Standing on the bank, I made one final cast, hoping to change my luck. The line jerked and my heart leaped, thudding in my chest. This thing was huge and fighting hard. We fought for seemed a good five minutes and it finally got tired. Not wanting to risk losing a big fish, I waded out knee-deep to grab him. Jeff was being a good sport and cheering me on. I lifted my rod with my left hand and was reaching to the water with my right hand when an extremely pissed off snapping turtle surfaced with my lure in his left rear foot. He stretched his neck, snapping and nearly biting my fingers. I lunged backwards and fell. Jeff practically peed himself laughing!

This was not over! The turtle got his second wind. I lost a shoe in the mud, and the on- ly way I could keep the turtle from getting me, was to keep my fishing rod at arm’s length. Jeff was really beside himself now. He finally stopped laughing long enough to take my rod and reel so I could get up and find my shoe.

Not wanting to lose another lure or leave it in the turtle’s foot created a whole new comedy show. My thought was to get a stick across the turtle’s neck and hold its head down so I could get my lure from its foot. After two broken sticks, at least thirty minutes, and some crazy “Three Stooges” crap, the turtle finally gave out. Jeff held the tire iron across the tur- tle’s neck and I retrieved my lure.

Tired, disgusted, wet, and muddy, I climbed into my pickup realizing I had left the lights on. The key turned, but the starter only clicked. My thoughts as I started the mile walk to the farmer’s house were, “Doesn’t get any better than this!”



3rd Place General Art

Hector Gomez

1st Place Essay

Obesity, the Big Problem

Peter Cao

I am never one to shy away from important, controversial subjects. So it is time for a look at the health issue that has caused the Grim Reaper to hire a tow truck: obesity. A word of warning: if you are a fat person and you are offended by this paper, I apologize; it is a joke. And if you do not accept my apology, I do not care; you will never catch me! A child's moobs (man-boobs) provide a perfect habitat for small woodland creatures that love dark, damp conditions. In fact, Weight Watchers are endangering the entire species by helping make people slim.

Fat people face tough lives. Many die young from childhood obesity. It is a pressing problem, because the little fatties get their arteries clogged up and die an early death when they collapse on the floor in a giant, spongy heap. They are incapable of continuing their journey through life while several tons of blubber cling to their frame, concentrated fate builds up in their veins, and every time they need to crap, a new challenge arises. They must first locate their anus, remove the obscuring rolls of fat, and then squeeze out a particularly large crap through their vitamin-deprived colon, resulting in a backed up toilet and a large amount of brown water splashing up against their fatty bums.

But I am afraid there is a dark side to obesity. The noisy approach of a fat person may well portend danger; take the example of notorious murderer Mia Landingham, who sat on, crush and killed her boyfriend. I protect myself from fat murderers like her by taking a bag of diversionary donuts wherever I go. But beware, once fatty develops a taste for human flesh, donuts may not be enough! Furthermore, fat people's eating habits are funding the most despicable, evil villain ever known to man: Ronald McDonald. Hear me out. Everyone knows that in order to fight a war, a nation's troops must be fit. No one wants the West to be unfit more than Al-Qaeda. Therefore, it logically follows that Osama Bin Laden is Ronald McDonald!

But fat people also bring great joy to society. Their very appearance is fantastically amusing: the bloated faces; the way the rolls of fat gather on their arms; the huge breasts; the way they waddle, shifting their enormous weight from side to side as they struggle to

walk, the way they are always sweating and panting. I could go on for hours about the comedic merits a fat person possesses, but then this paper would become equally as bloated. Besides, I am certain we can all appreciate them for ourselves. In essence, without their consent, fat people are providing us with laughter every day, simply by gracing the perceptive eyes of modern society with their rather noticeable figures.

I have digressed somewhat. As I draw to the end of this piece, it is time to inquire as to what we can do to solve the obesity problem. A while back, the British government came up with the idea of compulsory dance lessons for overweight kids. Now with this situation, we have two major health problems with the kids: obesity and depression. The dancing is not helping the obesity nor the depression. I mean, think about it. The kids won't get slimmer, because they won't dance- they can't dance. You need an electric cattle prod to even get them off the sofa. And then, of course, the depression worsens. Imagine, you already look like a beached whale, and then a fit, toned dance teacher comes along and starts prodding you do the bloody tango! Could your self-esteem possibly get any lower?

I do appreciate that the government is actually trying to tackle the obesity problem, but I should think they should deal with depression first—what do you think has prevented the depressed fat kids from hanging themselves so far? Every time they try, the bloody rope snaps. Listen, fat kids so not want to dance, they do not want to kill people, and they do not want to support terrorism! Let them have their Oreos and leave them alone!



3rd Place Photography
Caitlin Washburn

2nd Place Essay

Kleptomaniac

J. Amir Ben-David

The thrill and elation I felt when I stole was like a drug to me. When I was with my friend George, and we stole a couple of leather jackets from Dillard's, George said, "Let's go pawn these and get high."

"No", I replied, "The stores are still open, let's keep boosting."

I first started stealing while I was dating George's sister Shannon. When I met Shannon, she had a trunk full of clothes that she showed me as she gave me a ride to see Dee in Fourth Ward.

"I dress that foo'," She said.

On my first trip to Walmart with Shannon, she walked in like she owned the place. First, she grabbed some chicken wings from the deli and walked around eating them. Then she went into the changing room and put on the exact same shorts and t-shirt and left her dirty items on hangers. After that, she walked over to sporting goods and grabbed a \$180.00 fishing rod part and walked with me out the door. Later, at a different Walmart I exchanged the fishing rod part for store credit on a gift card which Shannon sold.

I admired Shannon's boldness and flagrant disregard of the law, and from that moment on I started to emulate her. I started to enjoy myself while stealing every day with Shannon. All day long, we would go from store to store stealing things. My wardrobe became Walmart, so I did not do laundry. "Circuit City is going out of business maybe they laid off the security guards. Let's go there," I said to Shannon one morning.

Later, at Circuit City a guard said, "Sir, what is that under your jacket?"

Busted! So I was in jail and my bail was \$5,000.00 I gave \$500.00 to a bondsman and got out easily. No problem. I made that in a day stealing. I was so hooked on stealing that I went right back to it. I was calling friends and asking if they needed anything cheap and took orders. I broke up with Shannon but not with stealing and even jail did not cure me.

I started dating a girl named Danielle and took her with me "boosting." I pulled up to EZ Pawn and backed into the parking space. "Just stay here," I told her. I walked in, grabbed

a backpack blower, walked out, threw it in her lap, slammed the truck in gear, and burned off. I got a rush of adrenaline when I did that and an easy \$100.⁰⁰ when I sold the backpack blower. Danielle was looking at me with her mouth open.

She has never seen me do that kind of thing. I thought I was a bad influence. Danielle tried to help me one time by turning the truck around and getting in the driver's seat. She was trying to help me have a faster getaway but she only succeeded in getting the store clerk hit by the tuck. Luckily he was not hurt. She turned my misdemeanor theft into a felony robbery. I had to explain to her that with the engine running, and my door closest to the store exit, it already gave me the fastest getaway.

I started hanging out with others who stole. Walking out of a hotel, I saw some Pakistanis playing soccer in the parking lot. My friend Steve was riding "shotgun."

"See those wallets and cell phones on that curb?" I told him. "I'm going to back up and put your door next to it and you just reach out and grab it," I continued.

"Okay," Steve replied excitedly. One of the Pakistanis got in front of the truck, but I nudged him off. The wallet had \$20,000.⁰⁰ in Pakistani money inside.

"We are rich!" I said.

At the bank they converted it to \$8.⁰⁰ American money.

George called me one morning.

"They got Shannon and her boyfriend yesterday at Dillard's," he said.

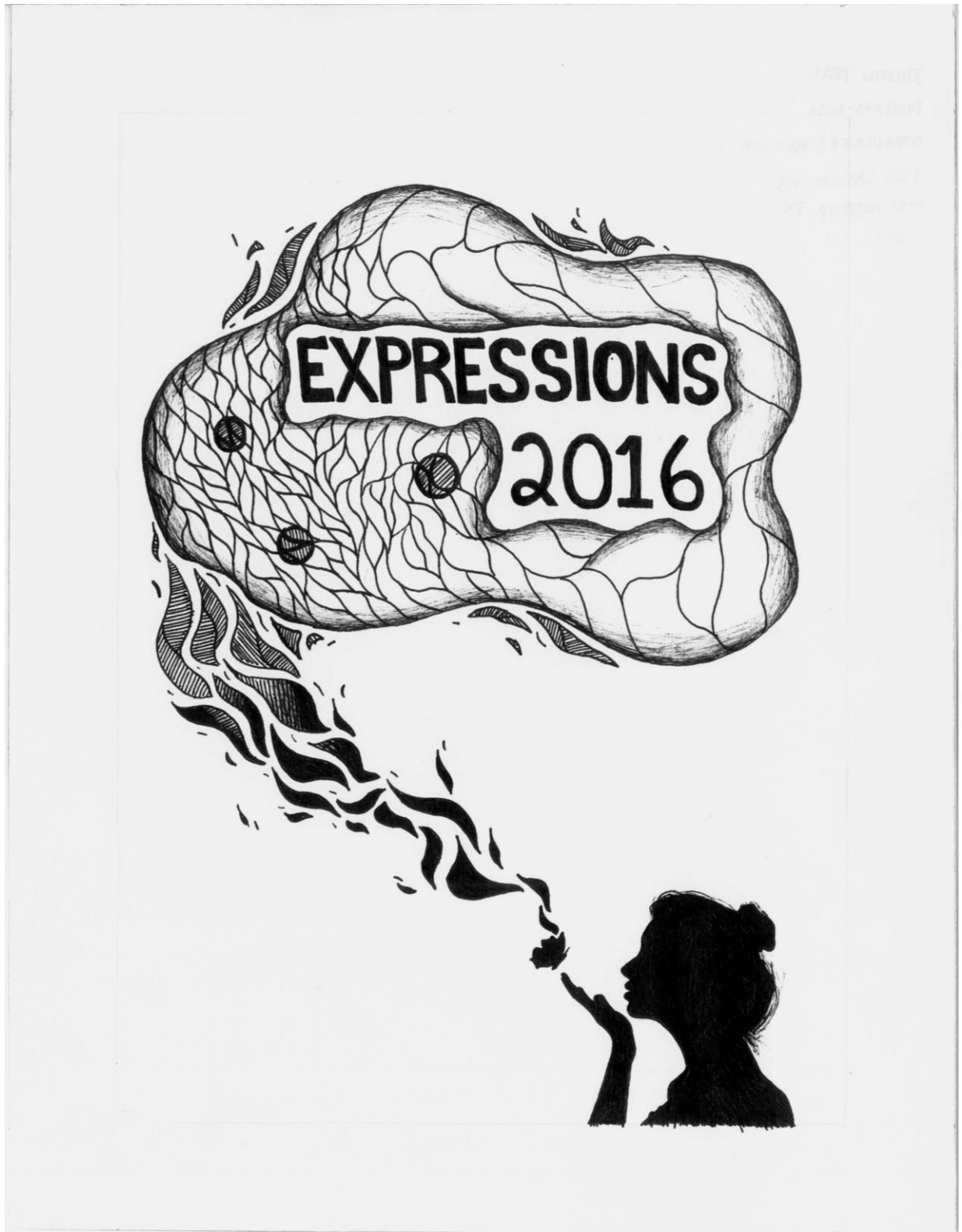
"What happened?"

"Too many people heard about those leather jackets that were not chained up and the cops staked out the exit."

When I was by myself I called my friend Danny.

"I'm going into Walmart. If I get busted can you come get my car? The keys are inside," I said. I could not help myself. I had a problem and could not stop stealing. I had money in my pocket and a bank account, but still I was stealing stuff all over town. Someone showed me how to use my bank account to steal from my bank, and I did that.

Eventually I went to prison for my problem. While inside the Harris County Jail I read about George in the Houston Chronicle. He tried to get away at Myerland Mall and ran over and killed a lady. He was charged with capital murder, and I thought of how that could have been me.



3rd Place Cover Art

Dustin Tran

3rd Place Essay

Mayhem in the Multiplex

Timothy Jones

We live in an age of armed madmen. Lunatics invade theaters and rain destruction upon hapless moviegoers, whose only “crime” is desiring a few hours of pleasant diversion. All of us have endured the outrageous incivilities of selfish “jerks” at the multiplex.

So let us begin our indictment of the “Rude” family. Unfortunately, the Rudes happen to visit the theater at the same time as Mr. Avery Mann, so his lot today is to play their victim, suffering the slings and arrows of their outrageous behavior.

Ma and Pa Rude walk in ten minutes after the picture starts, arguing loudly about the best way to live with hemorrhoids. They fling themselves down in the row behind poor Avery, still arguing, while Pa puts his smelly feet up on the back of Avery’s seat and Ma loudly farts. The odors combine; the result smells something like someone defecating old sneakers. Pa whips out his iPhone™ and begins googling Preparation H; the screen, on maximum brightness, lights up a quarter of the theatre, while the click, click, click of his typing reverberates through the auditorium. Ma takes this opportunity to stand and stretch for a few minutes, surely somewhat diminishing the quality of entertainment experience for those behind her. Avery thinks things could not possibly get worse, but he is wrong, so very wrong.

The Rude children arrive. Ma and Pa obligingly move down so they can sit behind Avery. They immediately begin fighting and screaming over their shared armrests, throwing food everywhere. Popcorn strikes the back of Avery’s head; the littlest girl begins shrieking the way only a little girl can, while the littlest boy begins slamming the back of Avery’s seat repeatedly with his kicks. Avery turns around, only to see what he can never unsee - the two eldest Rude teens French kissing and groping one another. (Did I mention the Rudes are from Arkansas?) Pa turns to Avery and says, “Ain’t it jus’ beautiful when a brudder and sister can git along like that?” Vomiting into his Super Big Ass™ drink, Avery thinks, Dear God, it can’t possibly get worse, can it? But indeed it can.

Grampa and Granny Rude arrive, reeking of Preparation H, Bengay and Jack Daniels. After assessing the situation, they begin beating the children, who whimper and cower under the blows. PaPa screams, “Shut the fuck up so these good people can watch the movie in

peace!” After a few more blows, an uneasy peace reigns. Avery feels ambivalent about what happened, but settles in to enjoy what remains of the film. The noble heroine lays down her life for children: sobs and sniffles fill the theater. Then, the most horrid impropriety imaginable comes to pass, the worst possible sin of the movie theater: the Rude grandparents rise and address the screen. “Hah! What a dumb bitch you are! I’d never do anything that stupid!”, screeches Granny, while Grandpa guffaws. Avery cannot handle any more; his mind cracks.

Suddenly, an armed psychotic dressed like Aquaman enters the theater, gibbering madly. Avery springs into action, wrestles him to the ground, and takes his gun away. Ignoring the adulation of the crowd, he points the handgun at his own temple, mumbles, “Sweet, sweet release”, pulling the trigger. All things considered, perhaps poor Avery should have just stayed home and watched television.

Honorable Mention Essay

Having a Child While Incarcerated

Michael James

When all the trouble started in my life, my girlfriend at the time was Aubrielle Lewis, and I had just received news that she was two months pregnant with my daughter, my first and only child.

The hardest thing in my life I have had to endure was becoming a father while I was incarcerated because parenting requires bonding. I have missed the best years of her life. We have not shared things like me tucking her in at night. As for my personal experience, the security of having my father present in the home gave me a greater self-worth. When certain things go wrong a father plays a strong role.

However, the psychological role takes a mental toll. When my daughter tells me she loves me, in spite of my shortcomings, it makes me cry. I begin asking myself, “How can she love me unconditionally?”

“Daddy, when I get rich, I will get you out of jail.” That is what she said to me one visit, and things like that make me rethink my behavior. During visitation, as I look into my ten-year-old daughter’s eyes, it tells me everything happens for a reason. God uses life as a plan to mold us into being servants for him. By being incarcerated, I realize what the brain is capable of now. By not being there present in my daughter’s life I have caused her hardship. I now know that real men take on their responsibilities in a healthy, civilized and law-abiding way. My daughter wants answers. This is the hardest thing I have been through: having to watch my baby girl grow up in photos and visits.

But what really hurts the most is knowing that I can never get back all these years. My mother tells me I am blessed either way, because my daughter and I have a good relationship. I thank God for that.

The most important link between parents and children is the way they communicate with one another.

Children will learn how to communicate with the world based in large part on how they have learned to communicate with their parents and those who are in their daily lives.

Among the greatest gifts we can give our children are the tools, skills, and knowledge that will enable them to exchange ideas like normal civilized humans. This is what makes it so hard for me being an incarcerated Father. I am here, and she is out there. But I do not allow this to stop me from staying in touch with my daughter and showing her how much I love her.



Honorable Mention General Art

Antonio Banda

Honorable Mention Essay

Memories of Dad

Clifton T. Holliday

“Load the truck!” These were some of my favorite words that my dad ever spoke. These words meant that we were going fishing, hunting, or camping. “Load the truck” meant another great adventure was in the making. So with the cheerful order from my father, I would race through the garage gathering the gear on my mental check list.

The last trip Dad and I took was a fishing trip. It was a beautiful sunny day. We drove down the Beach of Galveston Island, in his red, 1978, Ford F150. We found a good place to park. Lowering the tailgate, I quickly grabbed my gear and waded out towards the second sand bar.

Standing waist deep in the surf, and looking out on an endless ocean, make up some of my fondest memories.

As my father got older, he spent more time just sitting on the tailgate. He was content just to watch me fish. Plus, the waves packed a punch that hurt his knee and strained his back.

There are two things that cause this trip to remain so memorable. The first reason is that, due to my incarceration, this would be our last trip together. The other reason had to do with shark fins.

The first fin I saw that day was about forty feet away, on the other side of the third sand bar. A couple of hours later, I saw another fin, also about forty feet away, heading in the opposite direction.

Later that day, with my father fishing off to my right, I suggested that we swim out to the third sand bar to fish off of it. He agreed that this might change our luck, and off we swam.

As it turned out, swimming while holding fishing gear was not easy. I breathlessly made it. I then turned to look for my father who had quietly given up and was wading towards the truck!

Well, it did not take me long to learn that the third sand bar is not an ideal fishing spot. With the water up to my chin, I had to jump with the waves in order to keep my head above

the water. So as I was about to turn around, and follow the wisdom of the old man sitting on the tailgate eating a sandwich, I saw a fin! Only this time, the fin was a mere ten feet away!

Unconcerned, I decided to jump real hard with the next wave to get a good look at it. What I discovered was a ten foot sting ray. Both of its wing tips were out of the water as it gently rode the currents. This is what I had mistaken for a shark that day.

I once told my father that I hated memories like these, for they would fill me with regret, and shame, for the years that my crime had stolen from us.

Dad died on August 25, 2014. I never got to fish with him again. I can still close my eyes and see him sitting on the tailgate watching me. Nothing can steal that wonderful memory from me thank God.

Honorable Mention Essay

The Book and the Bear

Danny Strickland

The most meaningful piece of literature I have ever read was a book that I struggled time and again to get through. I must have read its pages a hundred times over. It is a beautifully romantic love story with an easy to follow plot; however, the book is not the whole story.

At twenty-two years old, my life was full of long days working two jobs. My wife greeted me at the door with a kiss and said, “She is still waiting up for you.” On cue, my sleepy-eyed, pajama-clad, two-year-old daughter would waddle into the room. With her teddy bear in one hand and a copy of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the other, she headed to my recliner. As she settled into my arms, the day’s stress faded away, and it was time to be “Dad.”

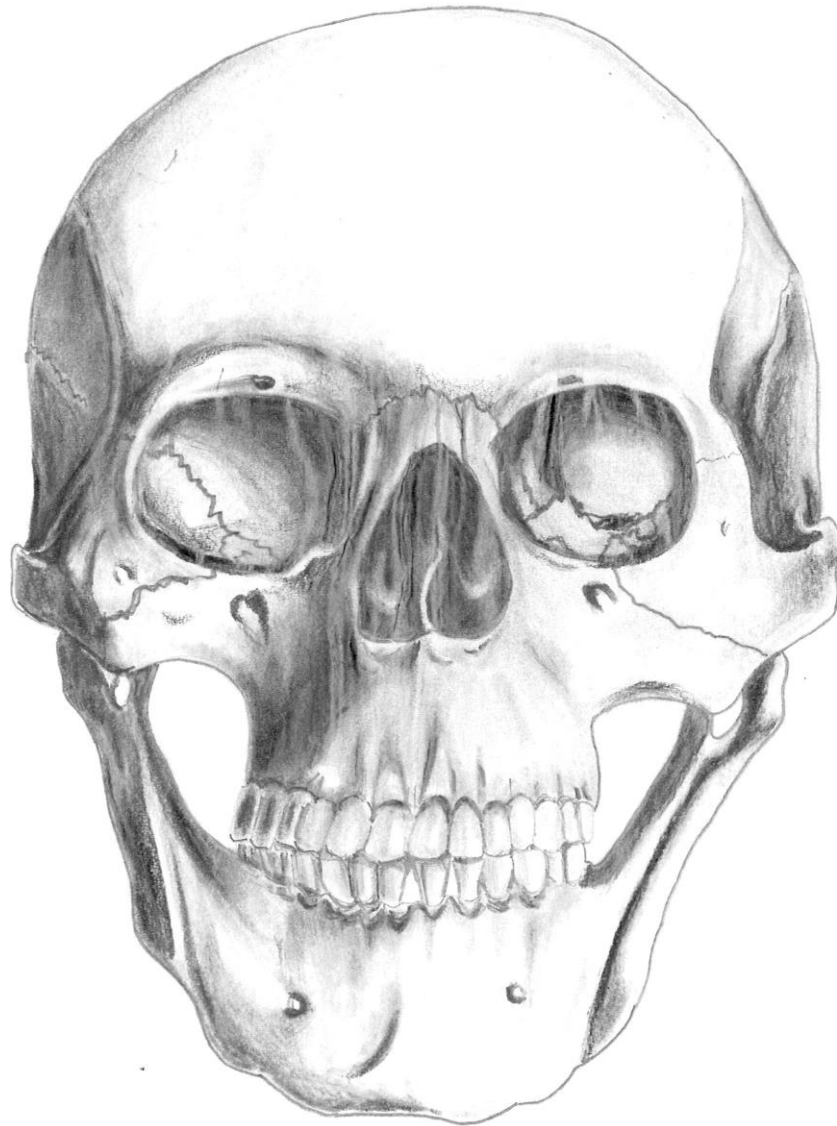
Together, we would open the book, and she pointed to the colorful pictures, and named all the dwarfs. By the time I finished a couple pages, she was dozing off. Then suddenly she would catch me trying to skip pages or stopping in the middle of a paragraph. Of course, she would have none of that, so I had to begin anew. After all, she had waited the whole day for these precious few moments with Dad, so she was not going to be cheated out of a single word. There were nights we fell asleep together before we learned Snow White’s fate.

My wife and I divorced and my baby girl grew up. The little book was left behind when they moved away. Many nights, drunk and alone, I would read that story, remembering happier times. Eventually, the book wandered off into an empty place without much thought.

My little girl has become a fine young woman. A few years back, she gave birth to my first grand-daughter. When they returned home from the hospital, my grown up little girl found a copy of *Snow White*, and her long-forgotten teddy bear waiting in her favorite chair. My mother had somehow resurrected both memories from the decades of disuse. She included a note, telling my baby girl (and her baby girl) the story behind the book and the bear.

Now, my daughter reads that same copy of *Snow White* to her daughter every night. My daughter asked me, “How many times did we read that book together?” She swears that she can remember it. I know that I certainly do.

My daughter's eyes filled with tears as she described me walking through the door to a pajama-clad toddler holding a book and a bear, and I could only smile and wipe my own damp eyes. My grand-daughter tottered across the tabletop, wrapped her tiny arms around my neck, and climbed into my lap. I recited the few lines from *Snow White* that I could remember. Just like my daughter years ago, she corrected all of my mistakes.



Honorable Mention General Art
Christopher Hussey

Honorable Mention Essay

What it Means to be a Teenager

Tien Tran

Oxford defines teenager as a person who is aged between 13 and 19. Seven impressive years of life defined by an eight-letter word is not enough. Being a teenager is more complex than just a number. The transition from being a kid into a mature adult is not exactly the easiest parts of life. In the eight short years, that feels like a life-time, teenagers are expected to grow up while being told by the adults surrounding them that they are too young to amount to anything.

Being a teenager means being astray. It means being lost in a maze of confusion and questioning if you want to find your way out. After deciding that you want to go on with life, you move aimlessly throughout the maze, grasping onto whatever corners you can, dragging yourself towards the exit.

Being a teenager means having arrows constantly aimed at your back while your enemies constantly try to pull you into their web of destruction. It means having snakes disguised as friends, trying to worm their way into your life, with the intentions to poison you.

Being a teenager means being surrounded by hypocrisy. People don't want to see you on the ground crying. They don't want to see you homeless. They don't want to see you averaging an F in all of your classes. They don't want to see you in clothes filled with holes. They don't want you to starve. As a teenager, people do not want to see you fail, they want to see you do good, but only as long as you are never better than them. As soon as a smile is permanently glue to your face, as soon as you have a nice house, as soon as you achieve a perfect 4.0, as soon as you are wearing designer brands, as soon as you are eating at a five-star restaurant every weekend, that is when the envious and jealously creeps in. These so-called friends are no longer happy for you, instead you find them degrading your every move. Being a teenager means realizing that success is a lonely boat ride that only has room for one.

Being a teenager is being constantly asked, "What do you want to be in life?" and having the urge to scream, "I don't know!" It means being told by adults that you are too young to know about life, that you're inexperienced and don't know anything. As soon as you hit 18 and graduate from high school, these same adults expect you to have a ten-year plan into the

future. They expect for you to know what college you are going to and what your major is. As soon as you hit 18, your parents expect you to become independent after they spent the past 17 years treating you like a child.

Despite the constant feeling of drowning, being a teenager gives you the most memorable years of your life. It means spending late night with your friends to create new memories, only to have school the next day, because no one remembers the night where they got plenty of sleep. It means doing anything to have a taste of what being an adult is like. Being a teenager means overestimating the amount of time you have left with your loved-ones. It means wanting high school to be over but at the same time, knowing that you're going to miss the comforts of it. Sophomore year, sitting at a sporting event with your friends, you realize, "I have two years left," but before you know it, it's senior year and the months are ticking down.

Being a teenager means falling in and out of love countless of times. It means looking at your best friend one day and coming to the realization that you no longer want to be platonic. It means having a pure, sweet and gentle love take a dark and possessive turn. It means feeling hopeless and broken for months when it ends. Being a teenager means having the strength to fall in love again. It means meeting a guy and seeing the dull future turn into an immense shine. It means smiling into the pillow after he drops you home. Being a teenager means realizing that home is not a place but a feeling. It means having your second love glue back the pieces that your first love broke. Being a teenager means being lost and being found again.

Being a teenager is not just a number, it is a collection of all of the knowledge, the lessons you've obtained, and the memories you've made. Being a teenager is the best and worst years of your life.

1st Place Book Review

Colton Reynolds

Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation. By Joseph J. Ellis. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. Pp. ix + 288. Preface, tables, appendices, bibliography, index.)

In Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation, the author Joseph J. Ellis portrays the story of post-revolutionary America. Being a distinguished historian and more than experienced on the topic, Ellis is able to describe the revolution in a way that is more conceptual to the reader. After the revolution, the problems that America faced were toxic to the unimmunized nation, and relied on characteristics such as virtues and morality to “heal” the newly birthed government. Ellis delineates how the proximate relationships formed out of the revolution helped to formulate the politics and policies of the era because of mutual respect for one another that could have only been gained through such an event. He uses the paramount figures of the establishment of our infant nation to “act” out the shaping of our political drama. With the main stage set, a brotherhood of actors including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Aaron Burr (Burr being more of a step-brother), acted on the most important and controversial stage of its time; the theatre of the newly formed United States of America.

The book is elaborated into six “acts” that help to correlate the situations faced and how they were handled by the personalities of the revolutionary generation. The book “fires off” with the duel between Hamilton and Burr on the ledge of Weehawken, where Hamilton suffers his fatal wound that ends not only his life, but Burr’s political career. Ellis’ articulate selection of this situation in the book aids the reader to understand how volatile our nation was during the post-revolutionary era; The duel was not fought over a refusal of Hamilton to recant his disparaging remarks; it was fought over the similar view of each participant that the other was threatening to abort the nation at the very start of its conception. The book then proceeds into a situation that serves to corroborate Ellis’ assertion that the revolutionary generation’s mutual friendship helped to balance a nation that was tottering on the shoulders of uncompromising participants such as Madison and Hamilton. The puzzle that was the future of the United States was an ambiguous concept, but one thing remained clear; Hamilton and Madison possessed two important corner pieces to this puzzle and needed one another

to put these two together. To put it less metaphorically and establish the literal interpretation, Hamilton needed the approval of his assumption plan, which was halted by the presence of Madison's opposition, and Madison desired to have the capital located on the Potomac, for which he respectively needed Hamilton. Both men ended up with their wishes, which justifies Ellis' maxim that "The Compromise of 1790 would top the list as the most meaningful dinner party in American history" (50). With Jefferson acting as the intermediary between the two in the style of a dinner party, indicating the context in which the agreement was reached. These examples are exemplary when being used to describe the dangers of political differences following the Revolution. The personal accounts throughout the book are important; however, these instances should be held with higher regard than others. Here Ellis provides more of a personal approach to explaining the outcomes of the two conflicts.

Regarding the Adams and Jefferson situation, Ellis uses slavery as well to provide a more intense interpretation of the tenuous nation. Many of the contemporary issues, if not all, were delicate and needed to be handled with the proper amount of attentiveness as Ellis repeatedly expresses throughout his book. The most cancerous and reoccurring topic that was conjured up during the immediate years following the revolution was the topic of slavery, more specifically the abolition of slavery. Ellis uses slavery to provide not only the point of its obvious ability to destroy America before America even knows that it exists, but also the differences in states' interests that were surrounding slavery. Another observation that can be made about the underlying conflicts with slavery was its obvious "black and white" interpretation; Slavery was a conspicuous contradiction to the very ideology of the revolution itself. This was made apparent and argued by the Quaker petition of 1790, which wished to "devise means for removing this inconsistency from the Character of the American people" (83). The last of the meticulously selected examples that Ellis uses to illustrate the complexity of the formation of the American Republic consisted more of individual personalities that bred conflicts as a result of clashes in attitude. Ellis uses two figures in American history that could not be any more different, yet anymore kin; Thomas Jefferson (with a hint of Madison), and John Adams. Their personality clashes shaped politics with a more profound impact than almost any other occurrence before it and set the precedents for modern politics. Mostly credited to Jefferson, their differences also led to the fostering of the modern political parties of today, which Washington had warned against in his Farewell Address. This can almost be viewed as

humorous as Ellis describes the quote of Abigail Adams to be “anachronistic to our modern ears,” (210) when she calls Jefferson a “party man” who was only involved in the campaign for his own personal gain. Because Ellis uses these occurrences, he is able to accomplish the feat of making the revolution and its outcomes more tenable.

The descriptive approach to the explaining the revolution should be greatly appreciated while reading this book, as it allows the reader to view the characters being portrayed as more familiar. Ellis’s use of sources such as the web of letters being sent to and from the leaders of the revolutionary era offer more insight on the true motives behind their actions. The claims made by the author are therefore authenticated by the participants themselves.

This evidence is more convincing as it offers less room for bias perspective and a more authentic portrayal of the events that ensued because the reader is almost “in the shoes” of the major influencers of the shaping of modern America. Another positive quality of Ellis as an author is the almost indefinite details used in describing each event, and his precise placements of events to support an earlier claim. Precise in context as they are, however, the one negative aspect of his book is Ellis’s poor use of chronology throughout his accounts. While reading, the reader inadvertently assumes that the events transpiring are chronological. This is catastrophic as it distorts the reader’s awareness about when things are happening in respect to one another. With that being said, and noting that the one negative characteristic of Ellis’s writing style does not detract from the overall assessment of the book. Founding Brothers contains elegantly comprised content that is surely to provide an enjoyable learning experience.



Honorable Mention General Art
Anthony Cervantes

2nd Place Book Review

Arthur Davis

Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation. By Joseph J. Ellis. (Vintage Books: United States of America, 2000. Pp. ix + 288. Preface, Notes, index.)

Joseph J. Ellis's Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation, is an eye opening, rather verbose description of six specific monumental episodes in United States History. He offers a more personal point-of view within these well-known historical events. The Duel encompasses how two men, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, let pride cloud their judgment. "The Dinner" refers to a secret political meeting primarily between James Madison and Alexander Hamilton to consolidate state debts into one national debt and to move the nation's capital to the Potomac. "The Silence" explains how the topic of slavery was not one that political superiors could agree upon. Instead of dealing with the problem at hand, it was pushed onto the following generations to handle. "The Farewell" covers, very in depth, the way George Washington planned on retiring why, and how this information was received. The last two chapters, "The Collaborators" and "The Friendship," illuminate how John Adams and Thomas Jefferson ended a very intimate friendship due to political differences, but regained it in the last decade of their lives.

To try and explain the particular sections of text that were intriguing could easily fill volumes. For instance, how emotionally relatable John Adams seems, or how the actions of Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr were utterly despicable. Prior to reading Founding Brothers, my perspective of our first president was not as in-depth. The facts pertaining to George Washington's Farewell Address are what captured my attention the most. First, Washington wanted the nation to create "a national university in the capital city" (153). His reasoning was not for educational purposes, but a means for the nation to heal together. He wanted a place for the youth of the nation to bond together and form relationships, thus revealing that there was "not just cause for those jealousies and prejudices" (154) between the Northern and Southern States. Honestly, I have never truly thought about how strong, intimate bonds could be formed through any national institution, but I agree with his thought process on the matter. As a nation, we still remain divided politically, religiously, racially, and culturally. We have national institutions, but these institutions are assembled in the same manner as they

were during the Revolutionary Era, or the individuals in these institutions are not inclined to share these intimate ideas as Washington hoped. We have educated individuals who stand at the forefront of these dividing lines such as Reverend Al Sharpton, so I wonder if Washington's dream of national institutions would actually heal a wounded nation. If not, what vital point did Washington not fully analyze, what information am I not seeing?

Although Ellis tried to vilify one person, or group of persons, and would speak highly of another person, or group, his idea of governmental division is one that I can agree with. Speaking for most individuals, we pick a side of an argument instead of rising above the occasion, as Washington did. These founding brothers were no different, with the exception of Washington's actions and a few of Adams; just as we see the government today, most of these individuals are self-serving. Towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, if an ideal went against what one political party believed, the phrase "treason" was openly thrown about. Ellis paints Washington as a one-of-a-kind individual. His ideals and actions are unlike any other leader, past or present. Our first president tried to make it very clear via his political and military ideals that an individual should readily give up power and that we should remain steadfast in our emotions, not act through aggressive means. A recurring theme in *Founding Brothers* is that our modern day counterparts in government are not learning from our history. Washington, in his Farewell Address, warned of so many pitfalls that our government should pay attention to, but very little was actually heeded. These indiscretions were blatantly obvious then, even if it is just through hindsight, but they are blatantly obvious now.

Lastly, these political, and personal, divisions Washington hoped to avoid, or at least help remedy after the fact, are still occurring today. The most recent example is the banning, and removal of the Confederate flag and Confederate statues. This is a highly charged subject, a division, which particular government officials gave into. For the first time during my generation, we as a nation want to remove, try to wipe away, part of our history. Slavery was definitely a contributing aspect of the Civil War, but there were other factors in play, such as States' Rights. I understand the racial undertones these objects have, but it was not only about oppression of a particular race. These items signify how these individuals felt oppressed in their own nation. This is a problem that should have been dealt with before 1808. It may have torn our fragile republic apart then, but it threatened to tear our nation apart in 1861,

too. Dodging the matter, remaining silent, was unbecoming of any of the men mentioned in Founding Brothers. To some extent, the same problem has yet to find a remedy. Although it is easier said than done, we as individuals need to rise above the division we so easily create between one another and have a more open dialogue about the thoughts and ideals we disagree so adamantly about.

To read these specific incidents in history, instead of the fragmented pieces we are given in school, is fascinating. However, the author's writing style is very verbose and does not fit a very chronological style. I understand that the written language is an art that can be mastered in very different methods, but it is an art that, at times, I cannot appreciate as fully as I should. In short, I feel like he was writing to the individuals and their knowledge level that would

Proof read and offer criticism on his work. Overall, the information was interesting, but the writing style used to convey the message was unappealing.

3rd Place Book Review

Arthur Davis

Andrew Jackson. By Robert V. Remini. (HarperPerennial: New York, 1999. Pp. ix + 256. Chronology, Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.)

Robert V. Remini's Andrew Jackson captures the attention of the reader by displaying how human our seventh president was. Jackson's trauma-filled beginnings seize our emotions and force the reader to empathize. The author describes how this young, rambunctious, mostly illiterate orphan becomes a lawyer, a national hero, and the president of the United States. Remini does a splendid job of writing a chronological account of some of the more influential, memorable moments of Andrew Jackson's life. The author successfully executed a very good idea of how to keep readers interested about information that, if not culled correctly, could be very lackluster.

Just as in Jackson's life, he is a bit of an oxymoron. It is very easy to commend an individual who places others before himself, but it is easy to be disappointed and angry at an individual who is selfish, and thinks more of money than anything else. It is not very common for these descriptions to fit the same person. The General is, oddly, one of those people. His love for money, fame and reputation played a part in his employment, education, and even his marriage. He decided to become a lawyer because there was very little money in teaching. His drive to become the head of the militia was mostly for fame. It is also very hard to say that Jackson and Rachel would have married had it not been for the fact that her family was very prominent. On the other hand, Jackson did his best to try to raise an orphaned Indian child, Lyncoya. His political career would also take some thumps for holding steadfast in his opinions. The Bank War was a very unpopular movement that Jackson led. Whether he was correct in his logic that America would be better off without such a powerful bank or not, the hero felt it was paramount to dismantle this institution before it caused harm to our nation. He also had a great amount of trust and admiration for John H. Eaton. Even though appointing him to the cabinet could, again, tarnish his reputation, our seventh president held staunch in his decision to do so, all the while standing up for Eaton and his wife, Margaret.

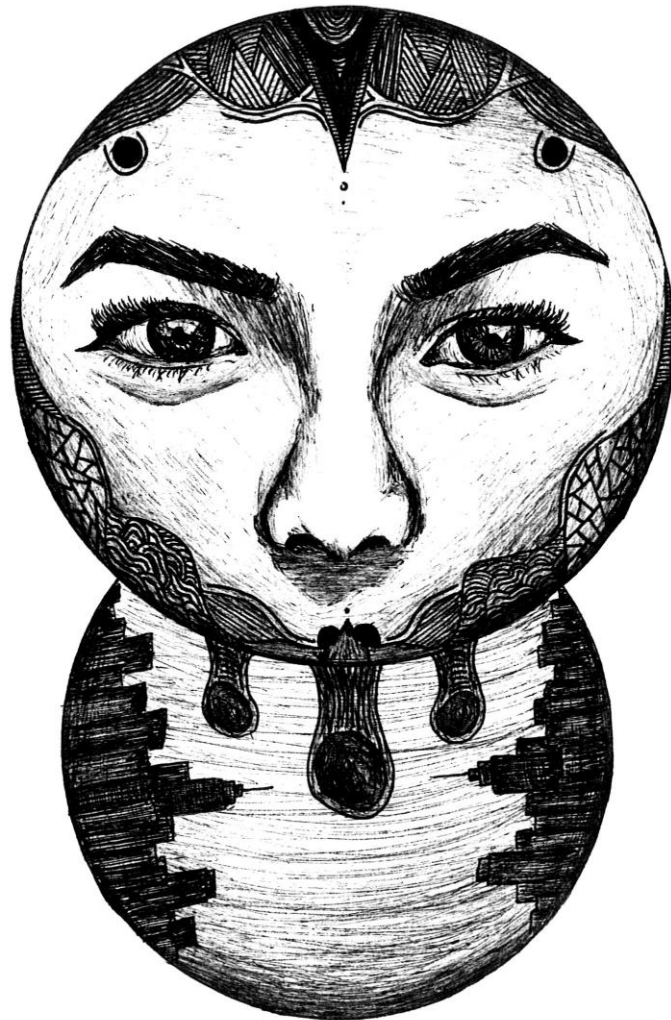
Because of this, I firmly believe that the times Old Hickory seemed incredibly soft hearted

were when he made parallels of himself, or his wife, to others. I believe that he decided to raise Lyncoya because he, too, was an orphan due to wartime circumstances. The same idea explains why he would defend Margaret Eaton in such a manner. His wife, Rachel, suffer the same ridicule, and it very well may have killed her. Jackson was a very complex man, but if we analyze his emotions, along with his actions, we not only see a hero. Jackson was a man who built everything he had from nothing, all the while reminding himself what and where he came from.

Although Jackson was an oxymoron in many facets of his personal and professional life, he was always a man of the people. Most, if not all, of his actions as president were to help both the rich and the poor. During his presidency, Old Hickory was diligent in his work and accomplished some very impressive feats. He absolved the national deficit and opened up some very impressive trade routes to the West Indies, Japan, and Turkey. Jackson's industry in office can also be seen through his actions within the government. He would always confer with Congress and his cabinet. This action, which was unprecedented, shows that the choices made were for the betterment of the country. He not only relied on his problem solving skills and education, but on the problem solving skills of both Congress and his cabinet. One of the most impressive portions of Jackson's agenda was to weed out the underhanded individuals in office. Once in office, "he expected to 'purify the Departments' and 'reform the Government'" (110). He wanted a very strong, competent government. Jackson planned to remove "all men who have been appointed from political considerations or against the will of the people, and all who are incompetent" (110). Because Jackson learned of the dastardly dealings in government at his own expense, the corrupt bargain between Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams, he had two reasons to purge the filth from the government. The first reason would be because of his personal rage toward these types of bargains. These types of agreements cost Jackson his first presidential race. Secondly, Old Hickory also wanted a stronger government that was less concerned about personal gain and more concerned about representing the citizens of the United States. His nationalism, which could almost be considered xenophobia, was exactly what this nation needed from our government. The General's constant chase of fame and glory really was a double-edged sword. On one hand, Jackson is perceived as selfish and slightly greedy. If he never tried to stroke his ego, fill his pockets, and leave a legacy for himself behind, then Jackson would have never had a chance to fill the

presidential office. His heroism during the War of 1812 gave him the audience to portray his everlasting nationalism to his country. This nationalism is what led him to pursue the best interests for the United States. His greed for fame gave him the opportunities, but his nationalism is how he carried out his actions.

Andrew Jackson was very well written, had a very strong chronological flow to it, and the author, Remini, kept the readers common knowledge in mind. The level of writing was not rudimentary, but it was not too scholarly either. For these three reasons, the book was thoroughly enjoyable. If a favorite section from the book and Jackson's life were to be chosen, it would be about his brother's death until he finally made it to Tennessee. This section portrays an individual, a child on the brink of insanity, going through a metamorphosis where the reader sees his suffering. Afterwards, the reader then gets to envision his coping skills. He was rambunctious, a gambler, a drinker, and very free-spirited. After becoming a lawyer, it seems that he begins to find his niche. Due to Remini's writing skills and the facts behind Jackson's colorful life, the reader is given a very three dimensional feel for Old Hickory. It is easy to see why he is a national hero and what Andrew Jackson, an everyday person, was like.



Honorable Mention General Art

Dustin Tran

Honorable Mention Book Review

Thomas Blankenship

Andrew Jackson. By Robert V. Remini. (New York, Twayne Publisher, Inc. Maps, 1966, pp. 1-256.)

The legacy of a president is at the forefront of his my mind as he leaves office. The question arises, “How will the people of this great nation remember me?” Andrew Jackson led an energetic life full of vigor and controversy. Throughout his lifetime, Jackson took end- less pride in his patriotism, loyalty, and most importantly his dedication to representing the people of the United States. Robert V. Remini leads the reader into the life of the seventh president of the United States and presents him as an ordinary human being in his biography Andrew Jackson.

Remini paints an interesting picture of the young life of Andrew Jackson. With the sudden death of his father at the age of twenty-nine, the Jackson family was left with many hardships at the Crawford House. As Jackson matured, the author portrays him as quite the character. It is hard to imagine a president as a teenager, that “loved to ‘frolic,’ to dance, to play practical jokes; and best of all [he] loved to wrestle, jump, and run foot races” (4). Remi- ni presents young Andrew as temperamental at a young age, which later bled into his politi- cal career as well. I found it thought provoking that Andrew Jackson was relatively unedu- cated and aspired to be a man of many trades. Other than his brushes with duels and ram- pant gambling, his passion for life and politics was evident as he was truly seen as a “roaring, rollicking fellow.”

Although Andrew Jackson was perceived as a political man and a lawyer from Tennes- see, much of his fame and glory came from his military command. It was nice to see that Remini acknowledges his military experience as “virtually nonexistent” (49). As a com- mander in the War of 1812, Jackson is observed as the hero of the Battle of New Orleans. As he led his troops throughout the harsh conditions of war, he was termed “Old Hickory” be- cause of his strong will and determination for success. The author gives a detailed account of Jackson’s participation and leadership role in the War of 1812. At the closing of the chapter “Old Hickory,” Remini does a great job of foreshadowing the upcoming conflict with Henry Clay of Kentucky. The reader gets a sense of jealousy as all eyes are on the beloved

General Jackson.

Jackson's journey to the presidency was not an easy one. Remini depicts Jackson's fame and candor as being a result of his military success in New Orleans as well as Florida. However, the author comments, "[Jackson] faced formidable obstacles because the presidency, since the founding of the nation under the Constitution, had always been reserved for men of demonstrated the ability to government, not military heroes, and certainly not Indian fighters" (99). The nation perceived Andrew Jackson as a symbol for their hopes and dreams. Remini highlights the election of 1824 and the controversy surrounding the Electoral College voting system. The author pokes fun at the loss of the presidential race by saying "Andrew Jackson took his defeat with dignity and grace," and continues in the next paragraph "...then came the explosion" (107). The election of 1824 and the obvious bad blood between Clay and Jackson is made clear by the author. As Jackson launched his successful campaign of 1828 and claimed the presidency, he looked to reform the government and dedicate his life to the people of the United States. Following the election, Remini depicts the death of Rachel Jackson elaborately. The reader can do nothing but feel sympathy for Andrew Jackson, as he then becomes the representation for the working class of the United States.

Remini describes the Jackson presidency as marking "the beginning of [a] truly democratic administration, the first in American history, one blessed and baptized by the joyful screams of a wildly enthusiastic public" (120). Jackson was determined to eliminate the national debt and to restore the democratic principle set forth by the founders of the United States. However, Jackson's presidency was not at all like a fairy tale. The author accounts for the removal of the Indian Tribes to the west as a "horror" (148). As the Indians traveled on the Trail of Tears, this decision to remove the Indians from their native land sparked many battles and led to the decimation of a large number of Native Americans. Remini comments, "Jackson always seemed to be doing two things at once: trying to maintain one foot in the States' rights camp, at the same time jammed the other foot into the camp of the nationalists. That the President managed this so deftly was a testament to his political skill" (149). Jackson's leadership skills are seen as unwavering and steadfast as he dealt with the nullification crisis with South Carolina. The author contends that the Jackson's reaction to the situation was "masterful" (153). His ability to stay calm and not overreact, contrary to previous encounters in his lifetime, led to the preservation of the Union.

One of most Jackson's most acclaimed struggles was with the Second Bank of the United States and truly revealed his presidential prowess. Remini remarks, "Andrew Jackson destroyed the Bank, no one else. Not Martin Van Buren, not Wall Street bankers, not the Albany Regency, Amos Kendall, Roger Taney, or anyone else" (163). The author portrays Jackson's motives for destroying the bank as justified because of his previous financial woes. Andrew Jackson exerted his power in the executive branch not for popularity, but because he believed it was his duty to protect the American people from the ability of the bank to change character of the nation as well as the character of its people.

Remini paints a vivid picture of the life and presidency of Andrew Jackson. His account of the president allows the reader to believe that issues that confronted our nation in the mid 1800's are relevant to current issues. The author displays Jackson as a president who inspired future presidents to support the people and to uphold the duties of greatest office in the world.

Honorable Mention Book Review

Rayshaun Brocks

Griffin, John. *Black Like Me*. New York: Signet, 1962. Print

“Rest at pale evening....A tall slim tree...Night coming tenderly Black like me.” This Langston Hughes excerpt from *Dream Variation* sets a unique tone to John Griffin’s account of his experience which he shares with the world in *Black Like Me*. John Griffin pens his first hand demonstration of being a black man in the 1950’s and well into the 1960’s. Griffin goes through great efforts as a journalist to give his personal testimony of how racial discrimination effects human life as a whole. He particularly focuses on the daily encounters of black men and sorted through the classic denial mechanisms of white America. Griffin interacted with great leaders such as Dick Gregory and aligned with the idealism of Dr. Martin Luther King. What I found most appealing was his bare honesty of how his experience affected him on a personal level, his revelation of the so-called truths of that time, and the birth of the “I’m black and I’m proud” mentality of a new kind of people.

This literary work was told from a personal perspective based solely on the author’s observations of the South’s culture. Griffin asked the question “How else by becoming a Negro could a white man hope to learn the truth?” (1). Griffin had been exposed to the accepted role and status of the Negro. To answer this question Griffin consulted a dermatologist who supplied him with a medication and a regimen to change his pigment from white to black. Griffin was able to experience the highs and lows of each race, black and white, respectively. His conversations and interactions ranged from hitchhiking car rides to shining shoes in New Orleans. Griffin described the “hate stare” effects as being hostile enough to cause him to feel lost (51). He was famished and parched on a number of his ventures from city to city, which all lacked the white privilege he had once known.

Griffin was able to shed light on accepted practices and moral values on the Negro culture unlike any other white American during this time. He journalized encounters with whites that expressed their views regarding the Negro’s sexual nature, their level of intelligence, and their proper social class as citizens. Griffin exposed the real emotional turmoil that was endured by Blacks in the South. He revealed the double life that a man had to live in

order to survive. A Black man had to hide behind a face of humbleness and meekness while dying inside from his harsh reality. Some Black women were forced to have sexual relations in order to secure employment. One white man commented, "I'll tell you how it is here. We'll do business with you people. We'll sure as hell screw your women. Other than that, you are completely off the record as far as we're concerned. And the quicker you people get that through your heads the better off you'll be" (105). Griffin showed that there was as much racism from Blacks geared towards Whites as well. Sadly, he revealed that the Black motive was understandable once some experiences coincided with theirs. Griffin discovered that Blacks believed in marriage, hard work, and providing a stable home life for their children. Black people were just as religious as white people, and that God would free them from the bondage of racism one day. Many Whites believed that the Blacks were in harmony with their treatment and felt that they were treated fairly or better in their daily interactions. Griffin assuredly stood on the ground that this was not, or had never been the case.

I was surprised that most of Griffin's encounters with white men led to conversations about sexual preferences or immorality. There seemed to be a deep interest and curiosity about sexual relations in the black community. I once heard that Black women were viewed as purely sexual beings. Most women that were sexually abused were all but shunned by the wives of the men that had sex with the help. What I found most disturbing is that one man admitted that if the women actually wanted to make a living being employed by him, she had to have sex with him before she was hired. In some bathroom stalls Griffin recalled that White men would pay to have sex with Black women and young black girls. One black man said, "Yeah, when they want to sin, they're very democratic" (26).

What most appealed to me was the purging of the "fragmented individualism" definition of the Black community. The thought behind this mentality was that a Black man must become an imitation white man (190). There were many Whites that took up the banner on cultivating this acceptance mechanism for the Black people and were somewhat appalled when told their services were no longer needed. The reverse was epic and very relevant today in the Black community. There was a spiritual embrace in the Black community that changed the world as they knew it. The New Black was now beautiful, enriched with substance, and worthy of progression. Black people began to take over their schools and demanded Blacks in positions of authority in order for local business to receive the Black dollars. Black thinkers built "a nation within a nation" (190). I would recommend this book to

all Americans, for this is real American history. This is the history that we only now receive at a college level. This is the history that can have a deep enough impact on a person's way of life to last a lifetime. I have heard many people say that history is just "his story." I admit, that this is the truth in all of its candor. However, Griffin's truth is from a first-hand experience that can never be repeated. In the most daring way he discovered the truth and I have been highly impressed with his connection and his care to this uncomfortable subject of humans versus humans.



Honorable Mention General Art

Michael Salinas

1st Place Literary Critique

The Beauty of Truth and Love

Karissa Grado

Romanticism can easily be defined as a group of free-spirited people that brought about change through “natural” and dynamic emotions and ideas. The focus on nature, the individual, knowledge, passionate love, and sex brought forth changes that made people spontaneous and explore their own ideas about life and experiences. During the Romantic period many writers began to explore different themes. These themes changed from being the religious views they had written about for years to being more free-spirited, sensual, and made people think and feel. The writers began this shift from traditional worldly views of the church to experimenting with what inspired them in nature and everyday life. These “spontaneous” emotions, themes, and ideas fueled the poetry of the Romantic period. However, it is John Keats and his concepts of “Negative Capability” and “Beauty and Truth” which were paramount to this era.

John Keats is a highly notable and influential poet from the Romantic period. Keats’ ideologies of “Negative Capability” and “Beauty and Truth” were themes or ways for him to express new ideals. The negative capability concept refers to not having a fixed identity. In a letter written to Keats’ brothers he states “Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason” (Keats 1927). This distinguishes between the struggle of poetry based on the writer’s personal beliefs and interests versus the impersonal records of the writer’s receptiveness to the uncertainties of experience. This quality that Keats’ noticed particularly in literary people of achievement, was a creative and deep empathy of appreciation for others. In negative capability the “negative” aspect refers to an individual’s capacity, or emotional range, and actively not knowing. The ‘capability’ aspect denotes a person’s ability to tolerate, and embrace that uncertainty and permeability of identity” (Voller 344-345). This means that a person experiences individual feelings and a sense of the unknown, but is afraid of experiencing that unknown identity. With this being said a person experiences the unknown by being ‘with’ and ‘in’ uncertainty. When a person is ‘with’ uncertainty, it is a ‘you’ rather than ‘I’ perspective and the unknown is elsewhere. However, when a person is ‘in’ uncertainty he ex-

periences a more personal and direct perspective of being in the unknown and that opens up many possibilities. These themes played a very important role in Keats' poem *Ode to a Nightingale*.

In the poem *Ode to a Nightingale* the “subjective description of the intrapersonal process of the poet illustrates ‘negative capability’ in action” (Voller 347). When this concept is in action that means a person is moving between the feelings of the unknown and the fear of the unknown. Essentially, the poem *Ode to a Nightingale* is about the unknown people experience in the darkness of the night. The bird that was chosen for this poem contradicts the concept of ‘negative capability’ because the nightingale only sings at night and also is known to represent love, beauty, or passion. Keats begins the poem by describing the feeling of a dull mind that is then drawn into the nightingale's world by its sweet melodious sounds. The poet wants us to experience the same sense of happiness and beauty of the nightingale that he has seen. Keats fully enters the world of the nightingale and seems to be thoroughly enjoying it and begins to think he wants to disappear into it forever. However, Keats returns from this worldly experience and fades in and out and begins to contemplate death. The darkness of the night is what is associated with this aspect of death, which Keats believes would free him of pain. When he contemplates this, he begins to think about how he would no longer be able to experience the enjoyment and ecstasy of the nightingale's song. This poem is about the “mortality and immortality [of] the nightingale's song, becoming more aware of their separateness as again he wonders about joining the bird, or his ill brother, as he refers to the biblical figure [of] Ruth” (Voller 351). Essentially, Keats was stuck going back and forth with this mentality of mortality and immortality where he is transfixed with the sounds of the nightingale bringing him back to experiences of enjoyment and making him also wonder about the presence of death. John Keats has such fluidity in his writing and his able to move from joy and despair and mortality and immortality so effortlessly.

Keats' other ideology is “Beauty and Truth” where “the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth” (Keats 1926). This was his solution to why we take pleasure in certain representations of subjects in everyday life that may be ugly or painful. With John Keats being one of the greatest poets of this era, he had a sense that “Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration” (Keats 1927). Keats believes that beauty is a pure truth that can defeat all other ideas and is a strong, powerful and spiritual

experience. However, 'truth' for Keats could possibly mean fidelity, which ties into the meaning of 'beauty' by being an attribute of lovers. This helps to understand that Beauty and Truth are eternal, basically saying, "eternity is the proper context of absolute Beauty and Truth" (Dilworth 54). Keats also believes that "'Love' makes sense of what 'Reason' cannot. Beauty and Truth do not conventionally stand together in isolation but are part of their own trinity, which includes Goodness" (Dilworth 57). To understand this concept one must believe that the 'love' aspect is the heart deciding for what the mind cannot accept which is the 'reason' aspect. This means that the two are different but the same and do not stand alone but together to create a 'goodness' for spiritual and everyday life. This can be observed in Keats' poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, where the essence of beauty and truth is directly linked to an eternal object.

In the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats' is trying to describe his encounter with the beautiful urn by providing vivid imagery and attempting to use all five senses in describing it. Keats' "poem implies that the speaker describes the urn as he is looking at it, but what the reader actually "sees" is not the urn but the speaker's verbal description of the scenes on the urn" (Kyoung-Min Han 251) itself. This is because we cannot see or picture exactly what the urn looked like so everyone's imagined picture is different. Keats' is trying to capture the beauty of a woman in describing the urn so it becomes a to us that it is in essence a female with the curves and the shape of the urn. In the poem he "ultimately seeks to represent the concept of immortality, and the most obvious symbol of immortality is the urn itself... represent[ing] the urn, [as] a symbol of timelessness..." (Kyoung-Min Han 260) which will exist for eternity. When an object is timeless it lasts forever and never ceases to be what it was, it is immortal. Keats' most symbolic lines in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* are "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, --that is all/ Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know" (Dilworth 51). This was his way of saying beauty and truth is equal to love and intelligence, and that everybody yearns for human affection or passion. This helps to understand the poem and gain our own image of the urn.

In conclusion John Keats's influential work of "Negative Capability" and "Beauty and Truth" were new ways of experimenting with poetry in the Romantic period. Since the Romantic period was a time of learning new knowledge, Keats' ideas he used in his poetry were considered somewhat philosophical, but mostly were influenced by his own imagination. These ideas were becoming increasingly popular during this era and were helping to open a

door to the unknown for people to learn and explore. The Romantic period was just a fun time filled with people who wanted to experience everything they could get out of life, basically people who wanted to live life to the fullest and gain the most knowledge that they could. This was a time of great influential change in industry and literature which helped to shape the world we live in today. The “free-spirits” were the people making the most changes and the ones who wanted to feel and experience all the emotions they could. Nature and life would fill them with overwhelming emotions and that would inspire people to create and explore. Romanticism was an awesome time of exploring new passions, finding new experiences, and falling deeply in love.

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2nd Place Literary Critique

William Wordsworth

Laura Fosdick

The world of British Literature has slowly evolved over the past several decades as the writers of the each time period began to focus on a particular theme that described the ideals of the day. One of the most influential periods in British Literature was the Romantic Period, which lasted from 1798 through 1832, was started by a man named William Wordsworth. Wordsworth began the Romantic Period and the idea of individualist thinking after he traveled to France and experienced both the camaraderie of the French Revolution and its ultimate down fall after the Rhein of Terror. In France, Wordsworth was exposed to new ideas, a new sense of being, wanting, and yearning for a better society were the people of a nation are united under one common goal: freedom of expression. It is through his curiosity and dedication that a new literary period began. William Wordsworth was the main catalyst for the Romantic Literary movement through his careful analysis of society and the desire to be one's own person through the French Revolution. Wordsworth's Romantic Period focused on setting aside time to explore nature and learn the ways of the world through careful observation and reflection, or a "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions." Through observations of nature and independent thinking, Wordsworth believed that each individual could learn how to work together to benefit society as a whole. Wordsworth was a man of great influence because he strived to find the beauty in nature to help the "common man" overcome oppression.

The French Revolution was a war between the common man and the royal monarchy, a fight for democracy. When Wordsworth first visited France between November 1791 to December 1792, he became enamored with the sights of passionate volunteers who ran together to fight for a new republic of France (Cambridge 1). Wordsworth agreed with the war because he believed strongly that each and every person is capable of changing his situation or the world for the better; if an individual believes strongly in his/her ability to change a problem, their status should not keep him from accomplishing his or her dreams. Words-

worth justified the violence because it represented the common goal of France, to create a sense of self-worth and the realization that France could become a more stable place to live.

During his first year in France, Wordsworth met Captain Michel Beaupuy, one of the main catalyst for the French Revolution. For the next few years leading up to the Reign of Terror, Wordsworth and Beaupuy corresponded through letters about the common man's plights because of the Royal government. It is through these letters that Wordsworth felt a sense of camaraderie with the people of France, thus enabling him to become a determined revolutionary (Cambridge 1). Wordsworth sympathized with the men because he believed in the power of change due to a unified body working together to make improvements on a nation's culture. Wordsworth believed the Revolution was necessary because he realized that it was "especially difficult for those who live by manual labour... (they survive) by self-support and self-sufficing endeavors; by anticipations, apprehensions, and active remembrances; by elasticity under insult, and firm resistance to injury..." (Bromwich 609). Wordsworth understood the common man's suffering and yearning for government assistance they did not always receive. For this reason, he began to focus on writing liberal works, encouraging revolutionaries to fight for their rights and create a new government that would support them.

Throughout the Revolution, Wordsworth remained a dedicated supporter of the cause until the atmosphere of the war began to shift from a united front to the Reign of Terror. It was then Wordsworth began reevaluating his involvement as a voice for the Revolution. During the Reign of Terror, the French Revolutionaries began to conduct mass executions of individuals who they felt were against the fight of a new form of government. With this turn away from unity, Wordsworth became discouraged and changed his original ideas of immediate change of government to a more conservative doctrine called Philosophical Necessity, which focused on "nature and freedom of will" (Ulmer 170). Wordsworth felt that the people had forgotten the main reason they went to war, which was to fight for the freedom and create a better life for France. With this switch to Philosophical Necessity, he "believed in causal laws that actively directed both nature and human beings... regulated the operations of the cosmos, underlying its orderliness and intelligibility; the human mind participated in orderliness..." (Ulmer 171). To create a unified nation, common laws must be put into place to create a sense of order and direction to create a stronger functioning society. After the Reign of Terror, common law and personal opinions began to be viewed as the enemy, not the monarch.

Once Wordsworth turned from political extremism to Philosophical Necessity, he began to research other failed Revolutions to compare them to the French in order to understand what led to the failure of each new government. On his quest, he “turned to ancient history to suggest a philosophy of political quietism and conformity... that ethical and political virtues were inextricably linked with each other, private and public morality being the same, and therefore, that the end did not justify the means: one would be qualified to govern others only when one knew how to govern oneself;” (Khan 313).

Wordsworth realized that personal ethics is a key component to the ultimate direction of a government or war. If a person or group of people already have questionable values or struggles to govern themselves, this philosophy will be applied to a leadership position. As Wordsworth compared failed revolutions, he realized that each war began with honorable intentions to improve the nation into a contest of patriotism. In his epic poem, *The Prelude*, Wordsworth analyzed the various causes for the failures during the past revolutions by making the connection of

“What a mockery this

Of history, the past and that to come! Now

do I feel how I have been deceived,

Reading of nations and their works in faith-

Faith given to vanity and emptiness-

Oh, laughter for the page that would reflect

To future times the face of what now is!” (Hadley, 820).

After the war, Wordsworth realized throughout history, nations that started rebellions against the government usually ended in failure because the revolutionaries looked towards empty promises to fulfill the dream of a new form of government. He understood his delusions in believing the French Revolution would succeed because the leaders of the war did not look towards history or nature to fight the war; therefore, they met the same fate as past fights.

After Wordsworth examined history’s flaws, he began to brainstorm ways society could improve war tactics. To do this, he began to analyze his theory of first focusing on the indi-

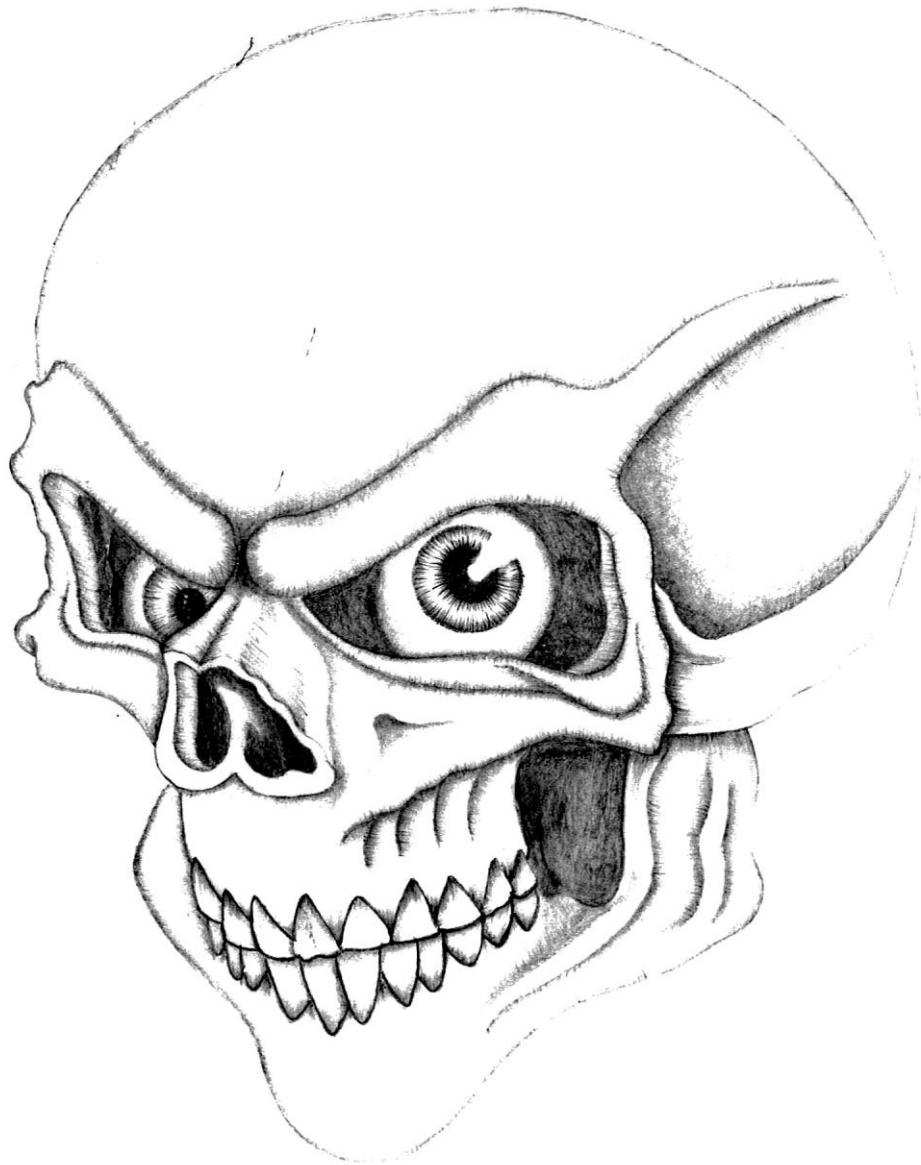
vidual before governing a group of people. During his investigation of human interaction, he realized that understanding nature is the key to a healthy society. Wordsworth concluded that nature was best understood through the five senses; sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste (Razaq 69). The idea of focusing on nature to understand the human condition delves into the complex realization that every animal, every plant plays a vital role in the survival of each one in nature.

As the foundation of the Romantic Period, the study of nature through the five senses explains the importance of understanding the relationship between the plants and animals of the wild. Wordsworth explains through his poetry that animals only display acts of violence when necessary for nutrients and when they feel threatened. By truly experiencing and analyzing nature, an individual will learn how to conduct his or her life in a way that would not only benefit each, but benefit the society. As an individual spends more time in nature, he or she will experience a “spontaneous feeling (that) presses outward from the heart as a play from its soil- upholds up, cherishes, and testifies to the energetic continuity of mere being... It comes now from an experience of equality, and expresses a feeling one has towards a “fellow being” (Bromwich 609). By studying both nature and history, each individual will be able to view the world in a different light, to see the importance of each individual completing his or her part without losing sight of a common goal to create a prosperous and fair society for all.

William Wordsworth expressed his desire create a better future throughout his poetry and epic works by expressing his ideas of nature’s impact on an individual’s view of the world. He believed that by analyzing the very foundation of life unregulated by human interaction, civilizations will begin to reevaluate how they work with one another to create a more stable future and prevent future mistakes by learning from past generations. Nature should bring inspiration, a spontaneous flow of imagination to create a stronger community, a secure body of people working together towards the common goal of improving the present and the future.

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Honorable Mention General Art
D'Angelo Anderson

3rd Place Literary Critique

The Mystery of a Stranger

Shelvin Jackson

Often times in life we behave in manners that may seem unbecoming to those who are closest to us. We are used to them and likewise they are used to us. A person's family and friends or those uniquely embedded into his life, and who have an intimate knowledge of a person and this knowledge dictates dialogue, expression, and conduct between each other. We conduct ourselves in this manner because there is no mystery between family and friends, but when a stranger enters into our life, mystery and the unfamiliar enter as well. This is the case in "Good Country People" by *Flannery O'Connor*.

To begin the story, *O'Connor* intertwines all of the characters together in some manner; she paints a picture of two families residing and co-existing with one another. One character, Joy-Hulga, emerges as the story unfolds and mystery grips her mind and imagination. The mystery lies within Manley Pointer as he enters by knocking at the door to sell the families a bible. As soon as he lays eyes on Joy-Hulga, a chase ensues. Joy-Hulga and Manley Pointer play the game of cat and mouse, and later in their conversation, a game of wits and words. Joy-Hulga symbolizes *O'Connor* because, like herself, Joy-Hulga was in her thirties and had not known a man. Joy-Hulga, upon the encounter thought about it throughout the night, "She had lain in bed imagining dialogues for them that were insane on the surface but that reached below the depths that no bible salesman would be aware of" (6). It was the mystery of Manley Pointer that intrigued her imagination. The allure of mystery weighs heavily within our society today. As individuals, we allow our minds to wander into the unknown when people intrigue us. Men and women alike venture into the abyss of the "What Ifs" and find themselves in situations they never imagined.

Joy-Hulga, like many of us, maintains the illusion of being in control. She controls her facial features and body gestures, as well as her thoughts, as she enjoys the kiss between herself and her new found friend. She maintains this control similarly to the control she displays during conversations with her family, but there was one thing which allowed her to lose control, her wooden leg. Her family, emotionally tied to the events which caused the accident and loss of limb, could not break through the imaginary wall barricaded around her psycho-

logical state, but a stranger whom she barely knows does. He was able to do this because he was not emotionally tied to her; therefore, she allows her mind to wander into the mystery of him. The wooden leg was the key to her emotional freedom and to her heart, “but she felt as if her heart had stopped and left her mind to pump her blood” (8). After this she becomes as innocent as a child.

One mystery lies in this question, how can a total stranger restore your total innocence? The answer is, he is not emotionally tied. In this sense she gained her innocence, but in another she lost it as well. She had given herself wholly to him in mind and spirit, and she felt free, but when she asked for that freedom back by asking for her leg back, he took the leg, packed it in his briefcase, and headed for the hills. When he took her leg, he took her heart. Like so many of us today, she lost her innocence to a stranger. She found her innocence and lost her innocence in a matter of moments while wondering over the mystery. All is not lost! Sadly she lost the innocence of her emotions but she was able to keep the innocence of her virtue and purity.

1st Place Poetry

Theatre Mask

Stephanie Abshire

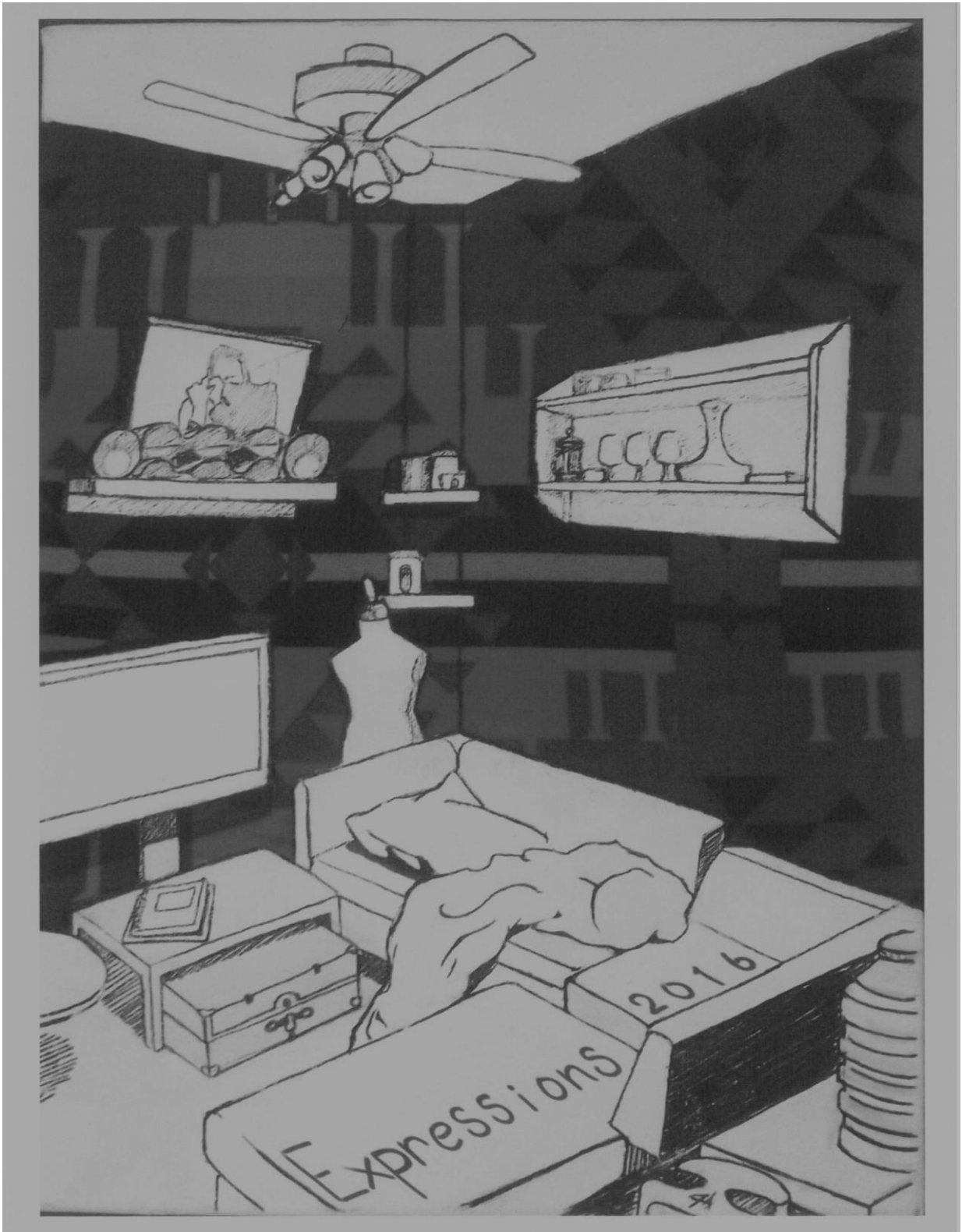
As I slip into her shoes,
The weight of her world
Presses into my shoulders.

As I exhale,
Every piece of me is lost.
Her memories begin to flow
Through me as my own.

For in this moment
I know exactly who I am:
I am her.

And when the mile is done,
And I kick off her shoes,
My life floods back in
Drowning her,
Until she ceases to exist.

And then I must ask,
“Does the passion come from becoming her Or
escaping myself?”



Honorable Mention Cover Art
Skyler Porras

3rd Place Poetry
Unconditional Love

Michael Salinas

Tell me, in which way, is my life still wrong?
I changed for you, yet you wouldn't wait.
Please, come back ~~~~~ before it's too late!

I trusted in you Unconditional Love Everything
you said, help my day
I feel no love from you now
To that, what do you say?
I hid in the shadow of "I love you,"
How precious those words for me.
Protected even, right under your wing.

But I never knew you, did I? You never meant it ~-
did you?
You were a trick to my imagination,
just a reason to give me hope!
I found that I don't need you now,
because it's God who helps me cope.

Honorable Mention Poetry

My Foolish Love is like the Moon

Timothy Allen Jones

My foolish love is like the moon,
She's distant and she's cold;
With waning charms, departing soon,
Panic has gripped her soul.

“With you I've wasted all my life,”
She tells me and it's true;
I never made her a great man's wife
The way she wanted me to.

My foolish love is like the moon,
Within she's barren and dead;
To reflecting light, solely attuned,
Neglecting her own light to shed.



Honorable Mention Cover Art

Pedro Lugo

Honorable Mention Poetry

How Many Ways Can a Single Man be Torn

Clarence Hughes

How many ways can a single man be torn, you're expected to father your children, you're expected to husband your wife, you're expected to family your family, but each and everyone has his own individual direction he wishes you to go. If you do not go in that specific place then you are less of a person, you are not right, you love differently for each and every person. So you try to accommodate everybody's wishes until stress is written with every line your face carries, until the daily function you easily perform becomes a complication, because sleep deprivation has set in, because lack of appetite reduces food consumption, which results in lack of energy. Compromise, sacrifice until when? Until I'm bed ridden from stroke, or until death comes from brain aneurism. Would anybody then profess my love for them, my dedication, what I've had to deal with.

Honorable Mention Poetry

I Am Overseas

Geoffrey Martin

I am from the North and the South
Mother from the cold weather, father from the warm. One from the Roman capital One
from the city of the Popes.
They both shared the same passion

I am from basketball therapy
My great great grandmother caught the virus
Then transmitted to the rest of the family
Mother and Father were professionals
Early years watching them on the court

I am from ruined childhood
I was that troubled kid that hated everyone
Lack of attention, anxiety developing in me
My parents were usually gone
Thank God my brother joined me

I am from hot chocolate in the morning
Toasted bread and of course Nutella,
Always been a morning person, smiling
Happy and the first one to mess with the grumpy one that cannot handle sunlight

I am from brotherhood
My brother was born nineteen years ago
Weirdest and fattest baby I've ever seen
Shy and quiet at first, fun and social after all
If I look in a mirror, I can see him also

I am private Catholic school,
I am lazy person, it was my definition of hell
My parents wanted me to be studious
I guess they wanted me to be successful
I went through, it wasn't easy but i made it

I am the big brother of my little sister
A baby from the 21st century, with the temper of my brother and I combined
Hard to handle, energetic and clever
She is like me but smaller, prettier

I am living my first loss, in 2008
Grandpa was my biggest basketball fan

He taught me how to fish, how to drive a tractor, how to live with what we already have. I will always miss him

I am from traveling around the world

First family trip to Ireland, first time far from home, I have seen Italy, England and Spain until I finally reach this country that will change my life forever

I am from exchange student in 2010

Shipped to Texas into an unknown world

Different culture, different language,

Found a new family that I can count on

I do not want to go anywhere else

I am from college student who doesn't know where to go. First year at home, without any motivation, failure was the only option

Back to Texas, motivated, determined

Looks like I will be an Engineer

I am from becoming someone responsible

Being so far from home, having to deal with everyday life problems by myself, I am growing up faster than I thought I would I

had no choice but become an adult

I am from missing my family and friends

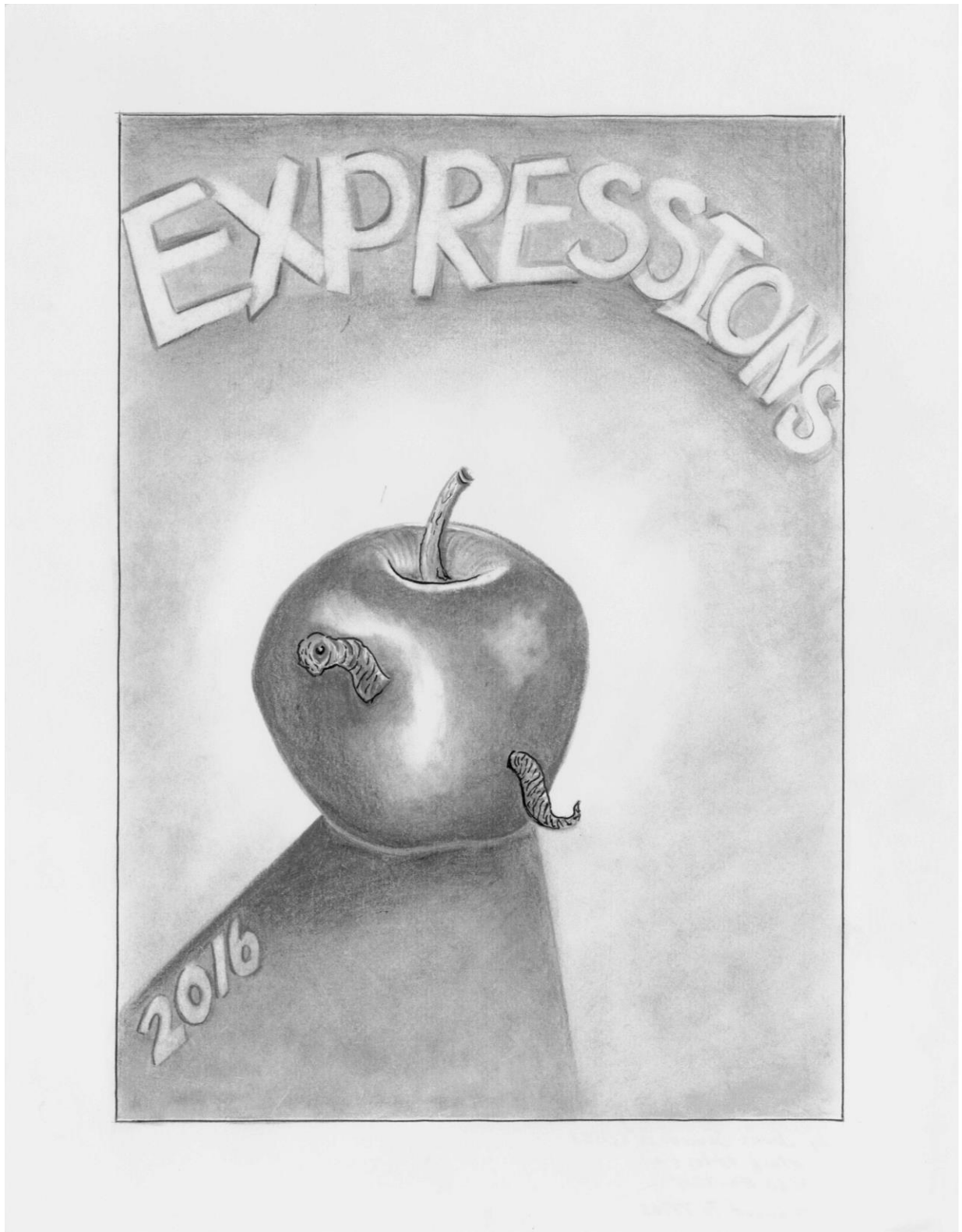
5,000 miles away, my family spends Christmas together. I am sad, and alone But my friends here, my second family

And this year I am going back, pretty happy

I am from France to Texas, Europe to USA

Born in the old continent, living my life in the new world. I am made of two cultures

I was raised as a child in French, became an adult in English. I am Geoffrey Martin



Honorable Mention Cover Art

Javier Saucedo

Honorable Mention Poetry

I Am

Skyler Porras

I am from father and mother.
Poor decisions and an unhappy relationship.
Three others with me.
Industrial maritime vacations.
Drugs, Deceit, Divorce.

I am now from mother, stepfather since four.
Three have tortured with me.
Father, now four wives and divorced.
A child 18 years apart from us four,
Now begins her journey.

I am from abuse and neglect,
Blood and broken bones,
Metal kitchen tools and headlocks,
Italians, corrupt cops, locks and doors
Murder, abandonment, hate.

I am from the phrase “worthless.”
Depression and loss of purpose.
Useless medications, bullies and blades,
Rejection of authority, childhood trauma.
Christian to agnostic.

I am from epiphanies and logic,
Creating my own purpose and want.
Pursuing the greatest outcome and how.
Books and desperation,
Realization and new course.

I am from myself, created by others to mold.
Preceded by great authors and men.
Dale Carnegie, Stephen Covey, Napoleon Hill, Charlie Chaplin,
Martin L. King Jr., John F. Kennedy, flaws and brilliance alike.
I am from self-awareness.
Unwavering when confronting disapproval.
Planning, executing, succeeding,
Pursuing healthy principles.
Growth, Honesty, Love.

I am from doubters, skeptics.
People all around me with failed goals.
They do not care enough.
Begging me to fail for their sake,
Crying in pain when I succeed.

I am from the people I help.
I create them and they create me,
Interdependence is key.
I grow greater no, WE become greater.
We are “Gods in the chrysalis.”

I am from the planet Earth.
Not from border, race, or religion.
People are people, we are all animals.
Needs, wants, aimless goals, chaos,
Satisfaction, order, happiness.

I am from my own mind; I am loving life.
Suffering to the point of Viktor Frankl.
Curious of death without fear of it.
Even the pains in life become pleasure, I
wish to live forever.

I am from lower class America,
Fighting my way into knowledge.
Pursuing greater standards of living.
Helping those that I can.
Finding my way to where I need to be.

I am from the arts.
My tool without limits,
My mind in the physical.
Not to be looked at alone but to be used,
Communication in the purest of forms.

I am from the future.
Continuously progressing indefinitely.
New technology, Global education,
Rapid growth of knowledge and healthcare.
In want of unending experience.



Honorable Mention Cover Art

Rolando Ramirez

Honorable Mention Poetry

I Am From Successful to Come

Paola Barrientos

I am from Mexico and America.
New culture, new traditions and new people.
Being educated by those strangers.
Will I ever understand or just pretend.
“Just hold on we’re going home.”

I am from the Spanish and English.
“Hola, how are you doing?”
Speaking an unknown language to others.
Being called an outsider, I’m I?
Rolling my r’s, but you can’t.

I am from fast food to home cooking.
Going out to eat with my family.
Staying in and cooking dinner. Making
Tacos de asada, barbacoa, rez, Lengua,
tripas, carnitas or fajita.

I am from a middle class family.
Buying new things we don’t need.
Wasting money like there is no tomorrow.
Spending money or saving money.
Making money or losing money.

I am from being spoiled and “it is my way or no way.” “You always get what you want,”
Getting new clothes, shoes, purses. Everything I desire will be mine.
I deserve it from all my hard work.

I am from the trill, PAT.
“Mama I love you, POP hold it down.”
Where the UGK, Pimp C and Bun B.
“Through the bad times and worse times.”
Coming from the trill but not representing.

I am from being surrounded by fake people. Their fake personalities and smiles.
Saying “OH girl, I love that shirt.” Turning around to her other friends “Girl that shirt is the
most hideous thing I ever seen.”

I am from being a daughter to a sister.
Taking care and arguing day and night.

Being called names and making fun of them.
“What’s one plus one, Twenty-one?”
I am from drinking Pumpkin Spice Latte
The typical white girl, but I am not.
I’m more Mexican than a taco and a sombrero combined.
The love for my Mexican blood.

I am in love with my future soul.
Together four years and more to come.
Love is amazing and I get to enjoy it.
“Netflix and chill” the lies.
I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world.

I am from speeding and cars.
Going 120mph but supposed to do 70mph.
Got stopped seven times but only got a ticket once, being a girl has its perks? Speeding is
in my blood; got it from my dad.

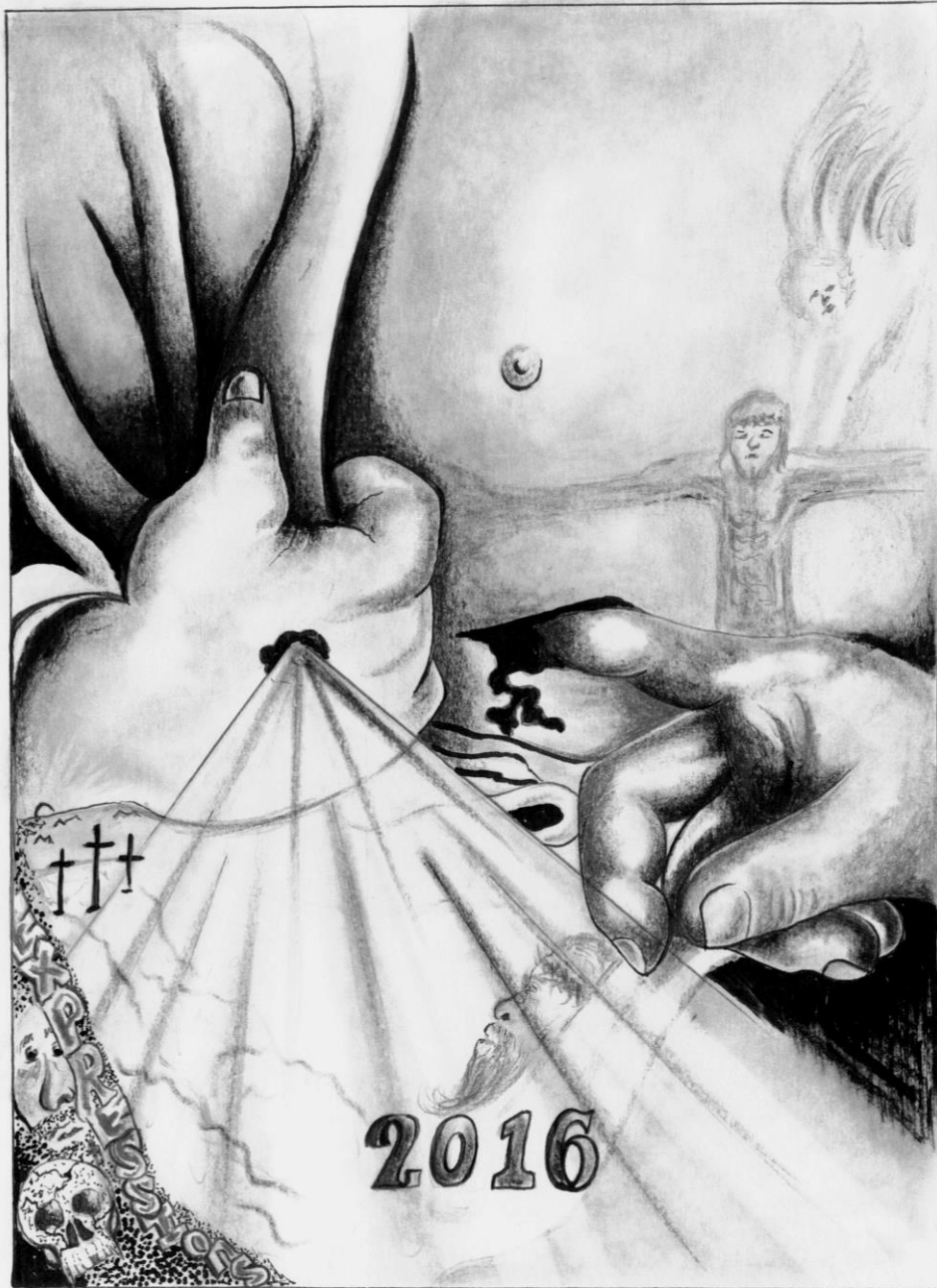
I am from team iPhone and always will be.
Taking selfies all the time.
Posting pictures on Instagram or Facebook.
For the world to see and criticize.
Tweeting my life away during sleep time.

I am from the football and Dallas Cowboys
Wear my jersey proud and showing it off.
Watching Sunday night football to watching the game highlights. Thank
God Verizon gives me free NFL app.

I am from a daddy’s girl and always will be.
From getting me random gifts to tell me “I Love You” before I go to bed.
If I need something, he will be there. “Dad can you stay here forever?” Best dad ever.

I am from music to sound.
Bruno Mars, Taylor Swift and even Edm.
From loud too low from close too far.
Earphones in, earphones out.
Music is always there when I need it.

I am from successful to come.
From Pre-k to college graduate.
One step at a time, one step closer.
One day I will be that person.



Honorable Mention Cover Art

Javier Saucedo

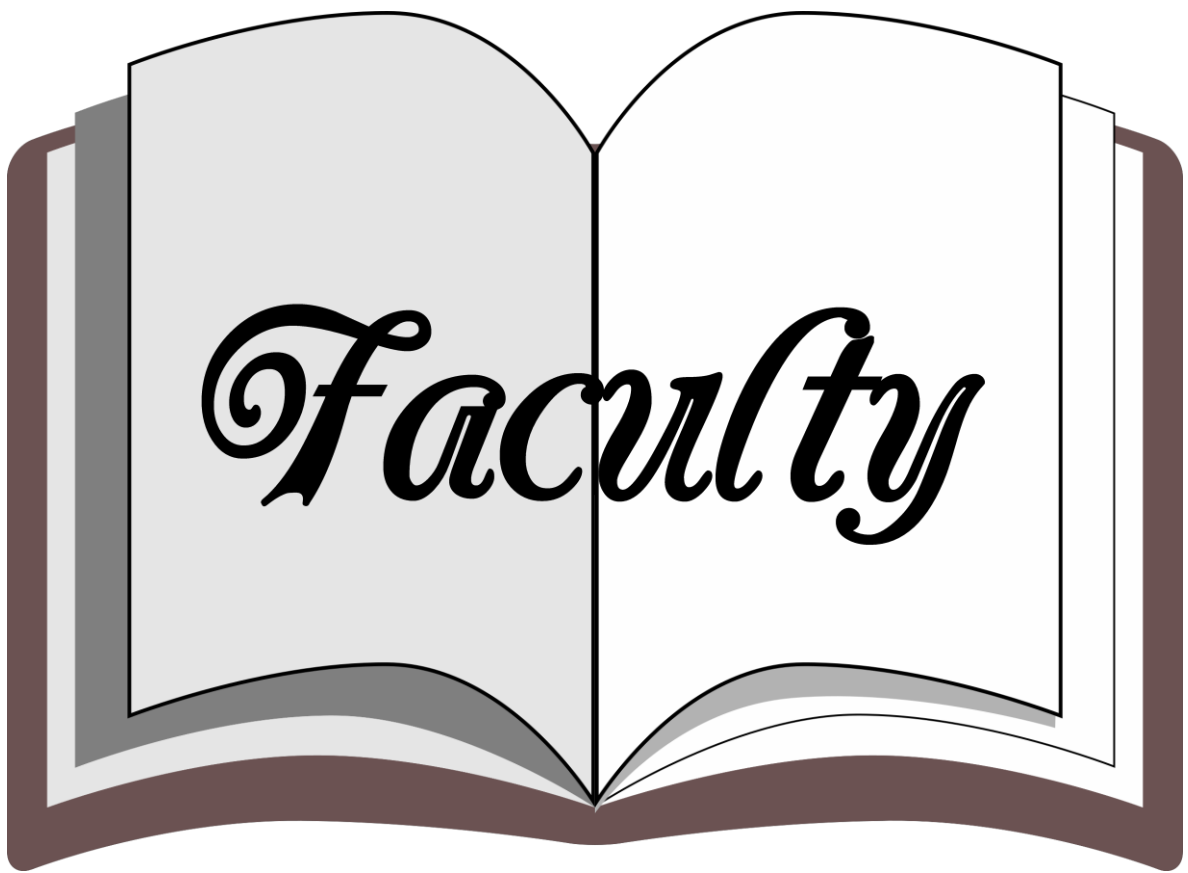
Honorable Mention Poetry

Reborn

Pedro Lugo

Here's a story of a dead man walking, with
his eyes closed shut living in darkness;
he sold his soul to the devil himself
who stripped him from everything and made him so heartless.
He was Satan's personal puppet,
on a road to destruction with no turning back,
all his life in and out of prison;
tattoos on his arms to cover his tracks.
Poison flowed through his veins,
from a needle that caused so much pain, a
poor man who hides behind his shame,
strolling through life with no one to blame.
Time and time again he tried to break, but
getting high was his only way to escape;
he hit rock bottom not knowing how much more he could take,
so he prayed for a change before it was too late,
That's when one day he heard a voice say,
"Come with me and I will show you the way,
trust in me and my son and you will see,
and know that the truth shall set you free."
so at once he confessed all his sins,
his old life is dead and his new life begins.
Never again does he want to shoot dope,
and through God it is possible but he must never lose hope.
Full of the spirit he could not help but to cry,
thanking his Father and he heard Him reply.
"When you are weak I will be strong,
if you obey in my word you can never go wrong,
I know at times you felt so alone,
but you must know I have been here all along."
This man is proof to those who are lost,
that God sent Jesus to die on the cross,
to give us new life and forgive us of our sins,
so let us be reborn with this message He sends.

R.I.P, Pops





Photography

Donna Ellis

Poetry
Traveler
Chad Belyeu

I will go now
With weathered pack shouldered Down
briar-thorn paths
Into still and misted waters
Via rule-straight Roman roads
Up crisp blue mountainsides
Through clouded imaginings
Of fields afire
To taste the blackened moss
Of aftermath
I will go until the call of home
Pierces with deafening clarity
Then rest—to see the world again
Her son reborn, and clear-eyed
For the first time.



Photography
Adrienne Champagne

Poetry

The Book

Eursala Davis

Have you ever wondered,
Why the moon shines so bright?
Have you ever wondered,
Why it's so calm at night?
Have you ever wondered,
How the earth rotates in space, But
keeps its place, at a steady pace?
It's in The Book.

Have you ever wondered,
Why we cry, why men die,
Why we lie?
Have you? Ever?

Do you ever wonder,
Can I be free, who's the real me?
Does anyone care, is anyone there?
It's in The Book.
Just look.

Do you ever think,
How will it all end?
Where did I begin?
Do I have a real friend?
Just look.
It's in The Book.

The Book- Just look
One Look just might get you hooked.



Photography

Donna Ellis

Poetry

Jealous of the Light

Gary Dickert

I am jealous of the light.

The way it caresses your face,

The way it captures your gaze.

It sees you when no one else can, Wrapping
itself beneath your chin as would a lover.

I am jealous of the light.

Its creates shadow that accentuates your lips,
And a silhouette that hints at a beauty just out of reach.

Light touches your eyes and creates a spark, Offering
a hint of a deeper you waiting to be discovered.

I am jealous of the light.

It is always with you, making you safe,

Keeping you warm within its embrace.

And, as a gift to the world, you share the light.
You reflect the brightness of your inner soul, And
others bask in your passion for love and life.

I am thankful for the light,

For without it, I would never have seen you.



Photography

Donna Ellis

Poetry
Change

Donna Ellis

They happen
We can accept them
Or ignore them.
Doesn't matter if
You're ready,
They happen.
You can recognize
Them, embrace them,
Make them yours,
Own them
Or you can discount them
Then be tossed aside.
You can be prepared,
Ready to take
A stance,
Or you can defy them.
Changes will come.
They will happen.
You can choose
to disregard them.
Stick your head in the
Sand.

Pretend they're not here.
But She'll rise up
And make Herself known
She'll kick the chair

Out from under you.
She'll pluck the cherry
From your sundae.
Drink your last beer
then wake you up
from a deep laden sleep.
But make no mistake,
Change will come.
Change will happen
To you or with you.



Photography
Adrienne Champagne

Poetry

Painting the Streets

Donna Ellis

With each kick and breath
He stares the men down
sinking it in the glove hard
and fast.

Focusing the ball
high and on the inside.
Tight on outside corner.

Ignoring
the batters.
He's just a
Rembrandt,

A Van

Gogh

A Picasso, at times.

Glaring

Watching

The batter and his quirks.
Winding up the ball is directed
Across the dish...unexpected
So the batter stumbles back
tripping over his own two feet.
While the Fireman stands his ground
on the mound with a smirk.



World's Cleanest Limerick

There once was a squirrel in Bridge City
Whose demise was to some a great pity
But a Cajun wastes not
When there's meat for the pot
Though the gumbo's just a bit gritty

Michelle Judice - Faculty

Photography

Michelle Judice

Poetry
The Good Within

Donna Ellis

What do you do when someone
has lost their way,
But unaware?
Leave signs pointing the way?
Dropping bread crumbs to find their way
back
or raising a flag high so it can be seen
seems to be pointless and futile.
Draw a picture to show them...
Hold a mirror to their face...
Point to the crevices of darkness
Where they fell in...then guide
them to the rays of light shining
from the mountaintop so they can see forever.
What can you do when
the Lost can't see what you see?
Unable to see the light,
blinded to the goodness of their heart
and the decency of their souls?
Cleaning the dirt from under
their fingernails, you wipe the smudges
from behind their ears and scrub their
skin till it's raw....yet they
still refuse to see the pureness
of their heart that has been sullied
by the haze of death.

A doubt of their own worth?
Questioning if they're deserving of happiness?
What do you do when the
Lost can't find their way
out of the darkness?
No matter how much light you shed
On the path in front of them, they stumble.
They take a wrong turn back into darkness.
They look at their face in the mirror
And see no one
or Darkness when you see a blank slate.
If the Lost cannot see the path before them
do we gently guide them in the direction
they should go? NO...
We seize them
Force them . Show them
Pull them with Passion and Love
Pointing, guiding, to the light
Be their eyes
So they will see what we see.
The Good Within.

Poem

Peggy

Sally Byrd

Oh, come, my friend Peggy, come and away.

Chase the wild stallions with me!

I know it is dark, and gone is the day

But clear is the night, the round moon so bright.

You can easily follow its gentle light

Follow it down to the glade.

Come watch with me there as the heat slowly fades.

They'll come if we only will wait.

Don't be impatient, they now near the brink At

the small stream they will both deeply drink

Sensing our presence to us they will wade

Assuming a lover's gait.

Oh, come, my friend Peggy, come, and let's play;

Let free the cares of the day;

Think back to the boys who our hearts stole away

Just for this moment we'll dance in moon rays

Down in the glen where they wander and frolic

We'll find the wild stallions again.

Bathe and then joyously your body perfume

Put on your finest attire.

Carefully arrange and add curls to your hair.

Then as your mirror reflects what you were You
find yourself lovely, so desirable once more.

Fit for the finest wild sire.

Full moons, stolen kisses, desires of our youth~~

Relax , sit still and remember~~

When the young stallions so eagerly pranced

And pawed the earth with anticipation

As with ardent moonlight they came,

Came and we gracefully danced.

The fragrance of sensuous gardenias wafts there.

Soft grass will provide us a chair.

The trees as our guardian a bower provide.

Our lips will whisper; the sound be their guide

They'll know we are there and heads fiercely toss

Glad for a passionate waltz.

Come now and see how wild stallions still roam In
the moonlight, not so far from home.

Choose and then make the fine one your knight.

He will be gentle; he'll give you no fight.

Glad will he be to feel strongly stir

The passions of youth once again~~

He'll be your wild stallion forever, my friend,
If you'll come and call gently to him.

Poem

The Gift of a Cherry in a Diet Limeade

Sally Byrd

What is love if there is no sacrifice
No bending to the needs of the other
No caring more for another's life
Considering no one closer than the lover.

What is love if there's no careful thought
Of working to make the other's life complete
Of striving, with sharing-- the best for love sought
A life with God's blessings--all good things replete.

What is love without a firm desire
To change faith for doubt, joy for pain
To dwell in the bright glow of hope's warming fire To
share warmth in all of life's joy once again.

So what is love then but a heart bent on this
To give what is valued, to supply what is missed.
No offer of rubies or emeralds or jade
Just the cherry the floats in my diet cherry limeade.

Poem

Eyes of Brown and Hair of Gold

Gene Byrd

Eyes of brown and hair of gold A
beautiful lady skittish and bold
Ribbons of red that billow and flow
A heart that has a beautiful glow

One that breaks for friend and foe
And yearns for all in light to go
Praying for peace and grace for all
Crying for any who stumble and fall

This heart's a wonderful valentine
A Christian Lady God let me find
Thank God she is in my life
I love you Sally my wonderful wife

Poem

Under a Bridge in Triste

Zebulon Lowe

I can't recall the day our paths crossed.
The town, the month, have sunk as fallen leaves
 Into the river bottom's darkest pools,
Stirred soft by memory's breath over a jade
Reflection's broken rays of sunlight fading
To black. We met the summer my travels
 Led me to Italy—to older worlds.
Under a ridge of smooth marble you sat
While the *touristiché* passed you, taking
Your soul with each snapshot, to add to their
Scrapbook of "adventures" in foreign lands.
Your eyes led way to an old south that the lines Dividing
 your face already spoke.

I couldn't help but notice the crow's feet
Carved deep into your leathered skin as rivers
 Often do—running through desert canyons.
Your toothless smile, cracked lips, jade eyes, ragged
Cloths, and hair—your silver hair wisped between us In
 the summer trade winds as we shared one
Brief moment of "us," and I offered you bread.

Pane? I asked and kneeled down to meet your eyes.

We broke bread together as a dying
Sun cast its glow upon forgotten wonders,
Long lost in the flood of progress and the West.
Your cheeks were sallow and sinking from days
Of fruitless humility on your knees.

The daughters of song and long silenced whispers Into
you ear and left your tongue speaking
The language of the wind breathing through corn
Fields—ripe for the harvest. The day was ours.

I wondered if my paltry molded bread Brought
you nourishment from days of hunger—

Days of begging with downcast eyes searching
For discarded coins, not worth the pocket space
That are cluttered with travel guides and maps.

How many come to see your land but pay No
homage to the keepers of its soil?

You sheltered me from rain that night, under
Tattered quilts thin and frail as the Gospel.

And you smiled soft at my glance of pity
So that I might be ashamed of judgement
Passed from a poorer south than you to you.

Poem

Jolene in Fields of Hay and Sugar Cane

Zebulon Lowe

Jolene. The waning sunlight warmed her face
as she pulled her cotton dress above her knees,
walked through hayfields as dancing stalks would grace
her thighs. The sun sank deep behind the trees
and laid an amber blanket on the land,
against the wind and rising stars, entranced
to songs of katydids and fireflies.

Barefoot and laughing—in the dusk she danced.

In cane fields and night whispered of quiet places
during the summer solstice, between the reeds and
sugar cane, where the nothing speaks in lace
tongues of night. The rising fog spills over, bleeds
into the fields, mothering the swampland.

Dim, distant stars drew close to earth—enhanced
the moon's reflection in her eyes.

Barefoot and laughing—in the dusk she danced.

Jolene. Amidst the hallowed barbwire space,
with rusted plows and barns taken by weeds,
remains the memory of that timeless face.

Her face flowed soft into her eyes, like leaves
trailing a summer wind through barren land
in a black and white, yellowed slight—fragranced
by lavender breath of youth when she sighed.
Barefoot and laughing—in the dusk she danced.

And so she rested her head upon the hay and
ran her fingers through the sugar cane,
waiting for the autumn season's first stay,
waiting for spring to bring its softest rain.

Poem

*Jimbo Contemplates Frogging on a Mid-Summer's
Night*

Zebulon Lowe

Air's hot tonight, damn hot, and humid too.
They should be coming out the mud soon.
They don't act like them other swamp things do.

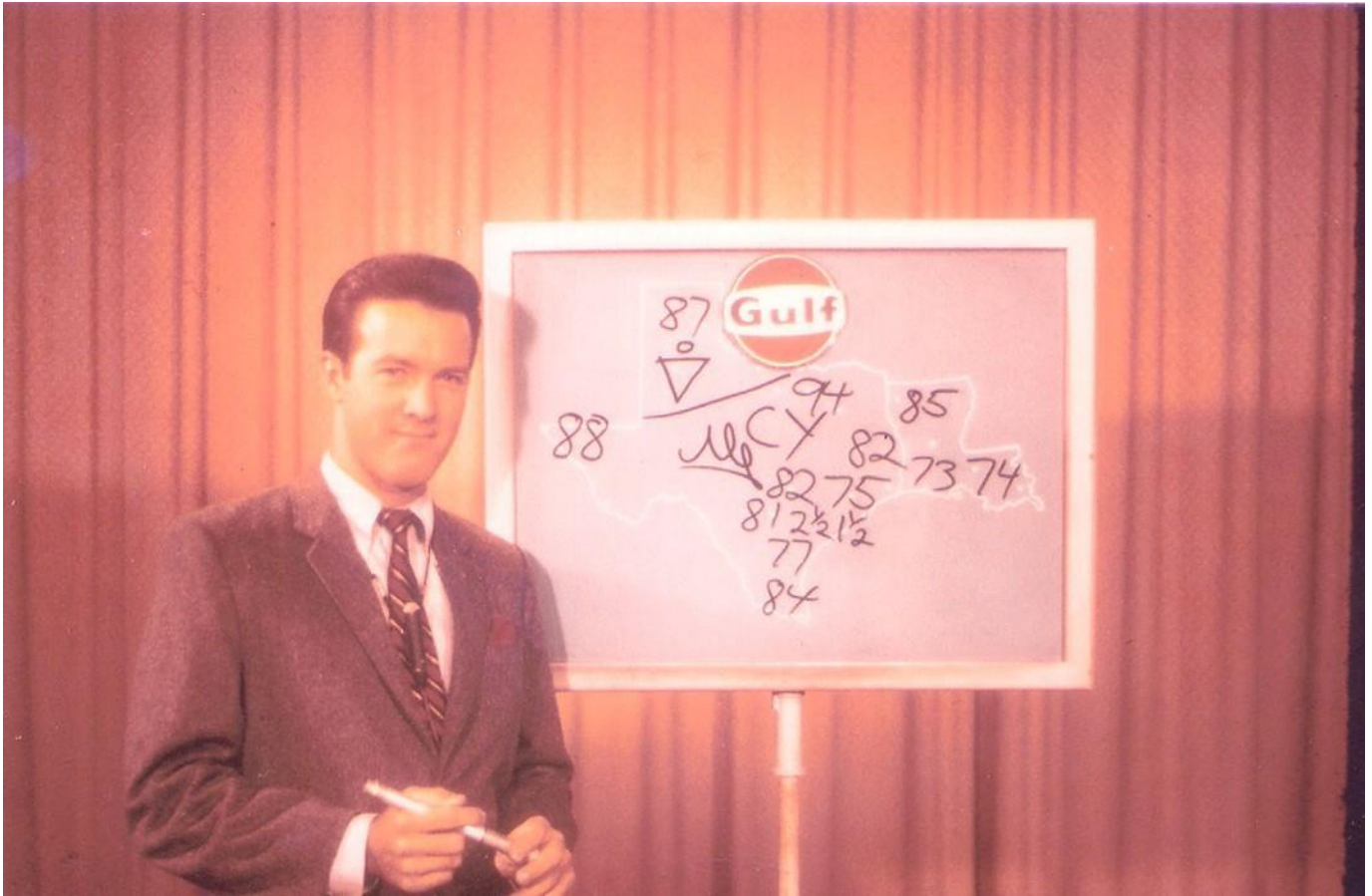
Come out the swamp for flies, usin' tongue glue
to catch 'em good. Just like on a cartoon.
Air's hot tonight, damn hot, and humid too.

Marge's on my back, "You can't go with the flu,
Jimmy." I tell her I'll be back soon.
They don't act like them other swamp things do.

They's eyes shine bright with some kind of orange hue
to see 'em good. Just like on a cartoon.
Air's hot tonight, damn hot, and humid too.

The gig's the key, you see. Gotta go through
that slimy skin 'n hold 'em and grab 'em soon.
They don't act like them other swamp things do.

Don't go look for them where the water's blue,
but thick and black—could hold up straight a spoon.
They don't act like them other swamp things do.
Air's hot tonight, damn hot, and humid too.



Photography

Robert Peeler

Essay

My First Life

Robert Peeler

It was radio, then TV. In high school I was listening to Beaumont and Port Arthur radio stations with J.P. Richardson, The Big Bopper, at KTRM in Beaumont, and Steve O'Donohoe, of Stevo The Night Rider fame at KPAC in Port Arthur.

After high school graduation, I visited Lamar Port Arthur, and Madison Monroe the then president told me to learn electronics and get the FCC License so I could be disc-jockey and Chief Engineer, I did and he was right. I got most jobs on the phone and worked for five different radio stations in East and Central Texas and two TV stations, Channel 6 and Channel 4 where I was weatherman and booth announcer.

There were many perks in that business. We met most of the famous musicians of the day. I worked with Arlie Duff at KKAS radio in Silsbee where he was very popular. One day, country music super star George Jones stopped by in a long red convertible for a visit. Being 21, I was really impressed. Arlie only had one big hit record but it got him into the radio business. I think he resented younger musicians like the Everly Brothers who had many hit records and a long career in music.

Arlie told me that he would travel with George Jones when touring when he had a big hit record and he learned not to stop off for a beer because George would stay so long he would miss the show. They later called him no show Jones and he had a record by that title.

One day during my afternoon shift 4 to 7, when I was playing rock music, a famous musician named Phil Phillips and his manager stopped by to bring me his follow-up record to a national hit song, "Sea of Love."

I moved on to a station near Abilene, then College Station and had to change careers for 3 years in the Navy to avoid getting drafted into the Army. When I returned to Beaumont I stopped by Channel 6 first and got a job as weatherman and booth announcer. The next year I moved to KLVI radio for more pay, then on to Channel 4 in Port Arthur as booth announcer and weekend weatherman. A very popular announcer was Cowboy John Garner at Channel 4 who previously had an afternoon show for the kids. I then graduated from Lamar and



Photography

Robert Peeler

went into advertising sales at KTRM radio in Beaumont.

What was really fun to do was attend the DJ convention in Nashville. The station paid for my trip, and I interviewed many famous people like Willie Nelson, Conway Twitty, Loretta Lynn and others. I had a back-stage pass to Conway's shows, and at the special version of the Grand Old Opry they did for the DJs I was back stage with Conway and Loretta for their show. I went with a former promoter, Pat Pace from Kountze and used his pass to attend the record company hospitality rooms where the entertainers gathered for refreshments. I visited with Conway most of that day and he talked about music. He said that you have to treat it like a business.

In one hospitality room was Willie Nelson, Sonny James, David Allen Coe and several other country music stars of the day. I interviewed Willie who told me through blood-shot eyes that his next album was religious music. I asked the "outlaw" David Allen Coe for an interview but he said that he did not have time. He leaned against that wall for a long time holding a large grey dog.

The next year I met Kenneth Lindsey, "Gomer" of Maybury fame; Dolly Partin, and others. At the airport while waiting to depart to Memphis and home, I interviewed Smoky and the Bandit's Jerry Reed. I had him read a card promoting the radio station. He said, "Friends, this is Jerry Reed. When I am in Beaumont I listen to KTRM radio and remember, "I told you so." He added the, "I told you so" to it. I had coffee in the airport with Freddy Hart, who had the big hit called, "Easy Lovin" and blind piano player, vocalist, Ronnie Milsap who shook hands and said, "Good to see you." He said the same thing again as he got off the bus at Gilly's night club in Houston for a show and I met him again.

I sat next to Don Everly of Everly Brothers fame on the airplane to Memphis. He had a large teddy bear as a gift to his daughter. The flight to Beaumont was uneventful, no famous music stars around constantly, but that did not matter since I did not have a camera anyway.

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and
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to those
published in
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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2016 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2016 this semester. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, the copy without the author's name is sent to the judges. The judges at no time see the copy which identifies the individual author.

The purpose of EXPRESSIONS 2016 is to publish the best entries for consideration. We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students, faculty and staff who contributed to and enjoy the magazine.

As the editor, I will make changes to reflect correct grammar and usage to enhance each entry and the magazine as well.

Caitlin James, Editor in Chief

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